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VISIT…

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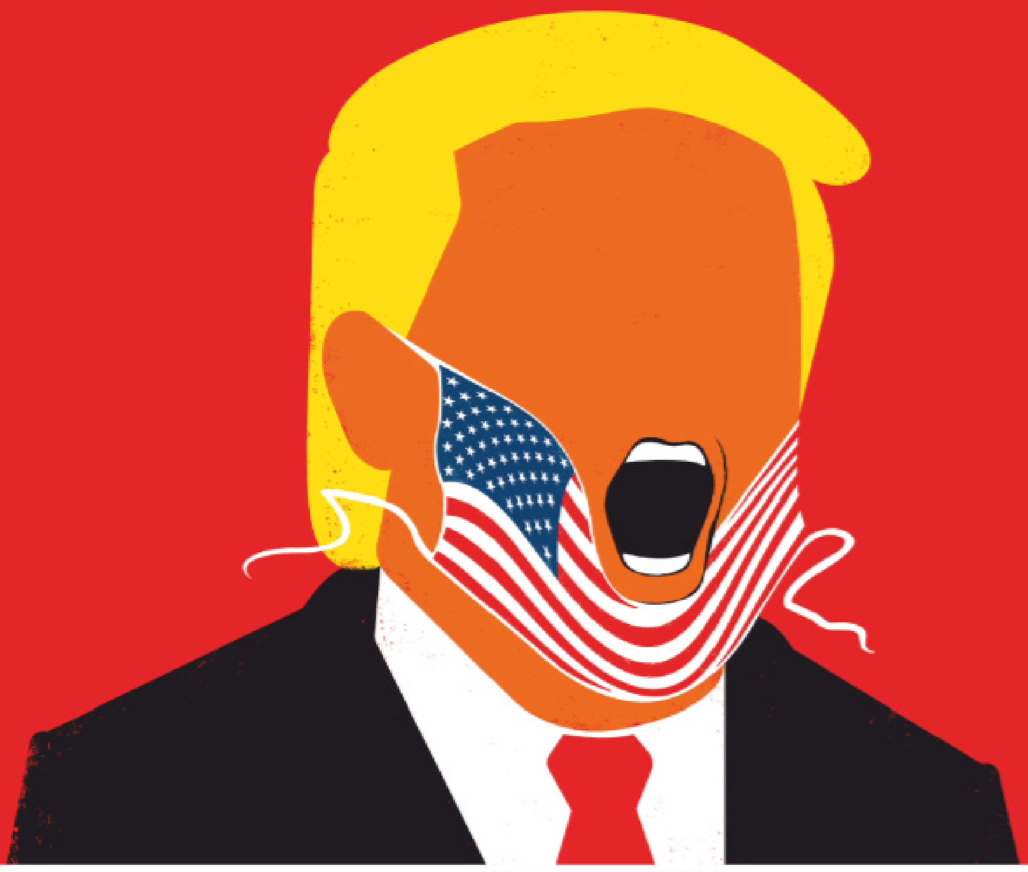
MAY 25, 2020

TIME

THERE'S A RIGHT WAY TO REOPEN AMERICA. THIS ISN'T IT



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A visitor sits on the Dumbo the Flying Elephant attraction at Shanghai Disneyland on May 11, the day it reopened

Photograph by Henri Shi for TIME

ON THE COVER:
Illustration by Edel Rodriguez for TIME

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Conversation

TIME
THE GREAT RECKONING

WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT ...

THE GREAT RECKONING After Alana Semuels' May 18 cover story on record job losses brought on by the coronavirus crisis, readers expressed outrage at the challenges unemployed Americans face. Twitter user @ZacharyMettler said the story did a "phenomenal" job of "personifying the human cost of the quarantines and stay-at-home orders." Investor @AnnaSvahn_ marveled at the difference between corporate and employee perspectives, and how "anyone can cheer over the 'recovery' on the stock market when people are struggling" to eat and pay rent. While @ajkeen tweeted that protest is the "only way anything is ever going to change," @Bewickwren quoted the article: "It's not that people do not feel the rage of injustice. It's that they're too busy fighting to keep a roof over their heads."

> ***'What is essential? We're finding out the hard way.'***
>
> **@DALVAJULIA,**
> on Twitter

THE LONG ROAD BACK Readers hailed the May 11 cover image, which changed the word OPEN to NOPE, as "clever, timely, & eye-catching," as K. Patricia Roe of Cordova, Md., put it. David Joe Medrano of Glendora, Calif., wrote that the *N* should have been stretched horizontally to make it an *H* and spell HOPE. In that issue, Molly Ball's profile of Maryland Governor Larry Hogan sparked feedback from constituents like Twitter user @mdawriter, who wrote, "I don't always agree w/ my governor on policy, but I approve of his pragmatism and clearheadedness in this crisis."

> ***'The question whether to open or to close will plague us until the virus is defeated.'***
>
> **NELSON MARANS,**
> New York City

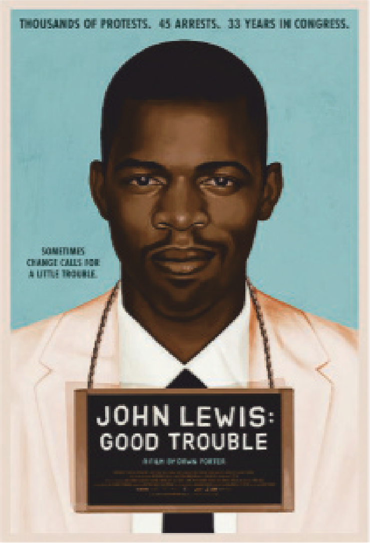
***TIME* 100 TALKS** In the continuing online conversations with members of the TIME 100 community, Dr. Pardis Sabeti *(below left)* explained how scientists crowdsource COVID-19 treatment ideas, and designer Christian Siriano opened up on pivoting to making masks. Learn more at **time.com/time-100-talks**

THE LEADERSHIP BRIEF

TIME is starting **a new weekly interview series with America's most influential CEOs,** sent straight to your inbox. Sign up at **time.com/leadership**

Coming soon

On TIME.com, see the new trailer for *John Lewis: Good Trouble,* a documentary about the life and legacy of the civil rights activist and Georgia Congressman. Directed by Dawn Porter and co-produced by TIME Studios, the film will be released on demand and in theaters on July 3. The preview is at **time.com/good-trouble**


THOUSANDS OF PROTESTS. 45 ARRESTS. 33 YEARS IN CONGRESS.
SOMETIMES CHANGE CALLS FOR A LITTLE TROUBLE.
JOHN LEWIS: GOOD TROUBLE
A FILM BY DAWN PORTER

HISTORY When World War II in Europe came to an end 75 years ago, TIME was there. Take a look inside correspondent Sidney Olson's original eyewitness account of the liberation of Dachau—the first Nazi concentration camp—and read the version that appeared in the May 7, 1945, issue. Learn more at **time.com/dachau-file**

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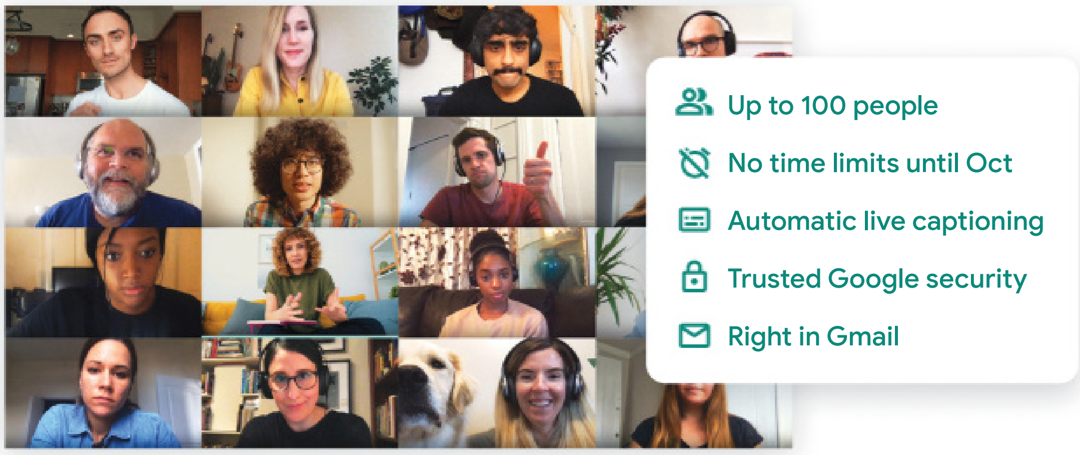

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Meetings automatically time out after 24 hours.

For the Record

19,000

Number of archaeological artifacts and art pieces recovered by Interpol, Europol and the World Customs Organization in a 2019 operation that spanned 103 countries, details of which were released May 6

‘Not every corrupt act by state or local officials is a federal crime.’

THE U.S. SUPREME COURT, in a May 7 decision to throw out convictions of two political allies of former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, connected to the Bridgegate scandal

‘If anyone is arrested, I ask that it only be me.’

ELON MUSK, Tesla CEO, while announcing May 11 that a California Tesla plant will resume production, despite a lack of clearance from health authorities

$351,000

Funds raised for charities, including one benefiting the U.K.’s National Health Service, by actor Andy Serkis, in an 11-hour marathon reading of *The Hobbit* on May 8; Serkis played Gollum in Peter Jackson’s film versions of J.R.R. Tolkien’s fantasy classics

‘IT HAS BEEN AN ABSOLUTE CHAOTIC DISASTER.’

BARACK OBAMA, former U.S. President, on the White House coronavirus response, in a May 8 call with former members of his Administration; a recording of the call was obtained by Yahoo News

‘I’m hoping that the power of music can do a little to blow away some of the corona-related blues that have been piling up.’

HARUKI MURAKAMI, Japanese novelist, on a nationwide radio special he will be hosting May 22

GOOD NEWS *of the week*

On his *Some Good News* web series, actor John Krasinski officiated a May 10 video-chat wedding for two superfans of *The Office*—and surprised them with a (virtual) dance by the show’s cast

‘My comments were rooted in my own insecurity.’

ALISON ROMAN, cookbook author, in a May 11 apology for critical comments she made about fellow authors Chrissy Teigen and Marie Kondo having released their own lines of branded home goods

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

SOURCES: AP, THE NEW YORK TIMES, CBS, BBC, THE GUARDIAN

The Brief

DOUBLE DUTY Parents like Carlota Bernal have become educators as COVID-19 keeps schools and day cares closed

INSIDE

FRIENDLY FIRE IN IRAN HIGHLIGHTS EXISTING TENSION

NEW INSIGHT INTO COVID-19'S PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

PENN JILLETTE ON HOW ROY HORN CHANGED LAS VEGAS

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEILA NAVIDI

NATION

COVID-19 creates a childcare catch-22

By Abby Vesoulis

TAMELA CROUCH NEVER THOUGHT SHE'D have to worry about childcare again. But when her adult daughter died from complications of a heart infection in 2014, Crouch moved to Montana to help raise her toddler granddaughters with each of their dads. Suddenly, nearing 50, Crouch was plunged back into a world of car seats, cartoons and parenting logistics. Eventually, the multihousehold family mastered a schedule that allowed all three adults to take care of the kids and keep working.

When COVID-19 hit and the girls' day care closed, the family managed at first. The casino where Crouch worked also shuttered, so she looked after her grandkids while their dads continued to go to their essential jobs. Then Crouch was asked to return to work on May 11—a month before the only affordable childcare facility she could find was set to reopen. "If you send them to a private camp, you're looking at $1,000 for a week," Crouch says, "and we can't do that."

$9,167

Average annual cost of day care for one child in the U.S.

59M

Number of people in the U.S. who work for companies with more than 500 employees—and are thus excluded from the family-leave mandates included in the CARES Act

$4.4B

Average amount U.S. businesses lose each year due to employees' missing work because of breakdowns in childcare

As states loosen stay-at-home orders and businesses call back their workers, families across the nation are finding themselves in a similar bind. With most childcare centers, schools and summer camps still closed, how can caregivers go back to work? And if they can't go back to work now, how will they afford alternate forms of childcare so they eventually can? It's a dilemma that's hurting businesses too. Even before COVID-19 struck, U.S. firms were losing billions of dollars every year when employees couldn't report to work because of breakdowns in childcare.

The federal government has introduced a few stopgap measures, and they are making a difference—for some. On March 27, President Donald Trump signed legislation giving $600 a week in extra unemployment benefits to laid-off workers, but that cash is set to expire in July. A week earlier, Congress passed temporary sick- and family-leave benefits, providing some employees with as much as 12 weeks of paid time off at up to two-thirds of their salaries. But businesses with more than 500 employees are excluded from the mandate, and firms with fewer than 50 can ask for an exemption. That's left more than 59 million Americans, including Crouch, uncovered by those government leave provisions.

Cristina Guajardo, a 43-year-old single mom living in Austin, won't get paid time off either. She was recently let go from her job at a company that runs study-abroad programs. Expenses are piling up, but she can't start a new job until her 2-year-old's subsidized day care reopens. "I've heard of a few jobs that have come up that would pay really well," she says. "But there's no way I can."

THE STRESSES of the pandemic have only exposed the cracks in America's unstructured childcare system, experts say. Families pay an average of $9,167 a year per child for day care, while the median pay for people working in those facilities is just $11.65 per hour. The average cost of full-time care for infants outpaces college tuition in 33 states, according to the left-leaning think tank New America. By comparison, Sweden subsidizes day care so parents never pay over $150 per month, and France operates government-run day cares priced on a sliding scale. "I think that the crisis calls for a complete reenvisioning of the American childcare system," says Elliot Haspel, author of *Crawling Behind: America's Child Care Crisis and How to Fix It*. Before COVID-19, he says, the system was "so fragile that a stiff wind could have blown it over. Now we've got this hurricane that has completely shattered it."

While the U.S. has taken some steps to help parents in this unprecedented moment, other countries have taken more aggressive approaches. Italy offered families €600 ($650) to offset babysitting costs. Australia is paying to keep 13,000 childcare centers open and allowing working parents to use them for free. Norway and Denmark permitted elementary schools and day cares to reopen in April.

Not all of those solutions would work in the U.S., which is still very much in the grip of the world's largest COVID-19 outbreak. Without direct coordination from the federal government, states are issuing protocols one by one, meaning some areas may be without full access to childcare for weeks or months to come. Some states have allowed day cares to remain open with fewer children, while others have permitted facilities to open their doors for the children of essential personnel. Meanwhile, an array of companies are accommodating their employees by allowing them to work from home or shift their schedules to adjust to their families' new needs.

But just a few months into the pandemic, there's already evidence that COVID-19 is making things worse for working parents—and moms in particular. Layoffs have so far been concentrated in female-dominated fields, but without childcare, single mothers like Guajardo may struggle to seize new opportunities. Married women may suffer too. They outearn their male spouses just 29% of the time, per the Census Bureau. If families have to choose which parent cuts back on work to stay home with kids while schools are closed, the recession may make some women the more obvious choice.

In Montana, that's the decision that Crouch eventually reached. With her employer reopening but her granddaughters needing care, she felt she had no option but to resign and stay home. It's unlikely she's alone.

PREVIOUS PAGE: STAR TRIBUNE/GETTY IMAGES; THESE PAGES: ARBERY FAMILY; SEAN RAYFORD—GETTY IMAGES

I RUN WITH
WITH M

STANDING TOGETHER Ahmaud Arbery's family members hold one another during a May 8 protest outside a courthouse in Brunswick, Ga., more than two months after Arbery was shot and killed following a confrontation with two white men—and just a day after Gregory McMichael, a former police officer, and Travis McMichael, his son, were arrested in connection with his death. Both were charged with murder and aggravated assault days after graphic footage of the killing surfaced.

THE BULLETIN

A friendly-fire tragedy in Iran marks rising tensions in the Persian Gulf

IN ITS SECOND DEADLY MISTARGETING incident in less than five months, Iran's military said it had killed at least 19 Iranian sailors and injured 15 more on May 10 after an antiship missile hit one of its navy's vessels in the Gulf of Oman. Iranian state media said a missile fired from a navy frigate hit a support vessel that had been putting out targets for a training exercise. At a time of tension, the accident takes on even greater meaning.

REPEAT MISTAKES Iran's military reputation was already reeling. In January, huge crowds of Iranians took to the streets after the U.S. drone strike that killed top Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) general Qasem Soleimani in Iraq. But sentiment shifted days later when the IRGC mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet, killing all 176 people onboard. That tragedy—on the same night the IRGC launched missiles at bases housing U.S. soldiers in Iraq—provoked widespread protests and rare criticism from proregime quarters.

RISING TIDES The strike on the support vessel is unlikely to provoke such sweeping anger, says Iran expert Ariane Tabatabai, because it involves the conventional navy, which tends to be viewed more favorably than the IRGC. Still, uncertainty over Iran's control of its armaments sends a worrying signal amid an uptick in tension with the U.S. In a confusing April 22 tweet, President Trump called on the U.S. Navy to "shoot down" Iranian "gunboats" if they "harass" U.S. warships, after the two countries' vessels came close to confrontation near Iran's territorial waters. Iran pledged to retaliate.

STORMY WATERS Tensions could yet increase. In April, Iran said it had put its first military satellite into orbit; meanwhile, White House officials threatened to invoke "snapback" sanctions laid out in the nuclear deal Trump unilaterally quit in 2018. At a time of volatility in the Persian Gulf, Iran's latest misfiring highlights the unpredictability of the situation—and the risks that uncertainty can pose. —JOSEPH HINCKS

NEWS TICKER

Deadly toxic-gas leak in India

Hundreds of people fled the area around a chemical plant near the city of Visakhapatnam, in south India, on May 7 as styrene monomer, a toxic gas, spewed from a factory chimney. The **leak killed 12 people and hospitalized more than 800.** On May 9, residents of a nearby village protested outside the plant, calling for it to be shut down.

Justices hear Trump records cases

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on May 12 in three cases about whether the House of Representatives and a New York grand jury have the **power to subpoena President Trump's financial records.** Arguments from both sides were made over telephone because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Hong Kong lawmakers get physical

Scuffles broke out in Hong Kong's legislature on May 8 as **pro-Beijing and pro-democracy lawmakers fought to physically take control** of the chair of an important committee that has been left vacant in a monthslong standoff. The struggles signaled rising tensions over China's tightening grip on the territory.

NEWS TICKER

Justice Dept. abandons Flynn case

On May 7, the Justice Department filed papers saying it wants to drop charges against Michael Flynn, President Trump's ex–National Security Adviser, who in 2017 **pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI.** Critics said AG William Barr had undermined the rule of law, and the judge on the case took steps to delay dismissing it.

Russian mercenaries in Libya: report

A U.N. report leaked May 7 says hundreds of **mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a Russian paramilitary force, are in Libya** fighting alongside rogue general Khalifa Haftar in his civil war against the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli. Russia has claimed that Wagner members in Libya do not represent Moscow.

Disinfectant poisonings spike

Accidental poisonings with household disinfectants in the U.S. were significantly higher than normal in recent months, with **a 121% spike in April compared with the same time last year.** On April 23, President Trump speculated that disinfectant injections could fight coronavirus; he later said he was being sarcastic.

GOOD QUESTION

How is COVID-19 affecting our mental health?

BY NOW, THE WORLD IS FAMILIAR WITH THE physical threat of COVID-19. But the psychological impacts of the pandemic are only just beginning to come into focus. A new study from researchers at San Diego State University and Florida State University is helping to quantify how deeply the coronavirus is straining the mental health of Americans. The study has not yet undergone peer review and formal publication, but its preliminary data are among the first to offer details on the scope of the country's coronavirus-related psychological struggles.

The study is full of grave findings. In April, more than 1 in 4 U.S. adults met the criteria that psychologists use to diagnose serious mental distress and illness. That represents a roughly 700% increase from data collected in 2018. Meanwhile, roughly 70% of Americans experienced moderate to severe mental distress—triple the rate seen in 2018. While this surge in mental distress showed up across age and demographic groups, young adults and those with children experienced the most pronounced spikes.

The size of the increase shouldn't have come as a shock, says Jean Twenge, a co-author of the study and a professor of psychology at San Diego State University. "In some ways, this is a perfect storm for mental-health issues," she says. "We're dealing with social isolation, anxiety around health, and economic problems."

Researchers unaffiliated with Twenge's study say that on top of the loss of jobs and the obvious health risks associated with COVID-19, the element of uncertainty is causing Americans a great deal of distress. "People don't know when we're going to get back to normal life, and that is quite anxiety-provoking," says Dr. Gary Small, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced U.S. politicians and public-health officials into a lose-lose dilemma: both groups are now weighing the life-and-death risk of exposing people to the virus against the manifold hardships created by stay-at-home directives and business closures. More and more, members of each group have discussed the psychological repercussions associated with each scenario—including the specter of rising depression and suicide rates. This new study appears to substantiate those concerns.

While some might point to the psychological blowback as a reason to reopen the economy and lift restrictions, Twenge says that course of action is also fraught. "Opening up too soon and then having to shut back down could also have very negative consequences from a mental-health perspective, such as a further increase in mental distress," she says.

"If there's a policy message here," Twenge adds, "it's that people are suffering and we need to put resources into mental-health treatment." —MARKHAM HEID

HISTORY

Deciphering the past

To mark 75 years since WW II ended in Europe, the U.K. published on May 8 the final Nazi message it decoded in 1945: "Closing down forever," it said. Here, more cracked codes. —*Ciara Nugent*

VIGENÈRE UNVEILED
The Vigenère cipher, designed in the mid–16th century, uses several different codes to disguise text. In 1854, British mathematician Charles Babbage became the first known person to break it.

PENETRATING POE
In a magazine in the 1840s, Edgar Allan Poe invited readers to solve two ciphers, claiming he had failed to do so. A literature scholar finally cracked one in 1992. A software engineer solved the other in 2000.

RITUALS REVEALED
In 2011, a team of Swedish and U.S. linguists cracked the **Copiale cipher,** a 105-page encrypted book dating back to 1866. The text described the initiation rituals of a German secret society.

CIPHER: UPPSALA UNIVERSITY; LITTLE RICHARD: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; HORN: AARON RAPOPORT—CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

Milestones

DIED
Comedian **Jerry Stiller,** who played Frank Costanza on *Seinfeld,* on May 11, at 92.
> **Aimee Stephens,** whose transgender-rights case is pending before the Supreme Court, on May 12, at 59.

FOUND
Malnutrition, to be the primary cause of poor health and death worldwide, according to the *2020 Global Nutrition Report,* released May 12.

ARRESTED
Two fugitives in the **fatal shooting of a security guard** at a Family Dollar store in Michigan after an altercation over face-mask rules, authorities said on May 8. Four people have been charged in connection with the case.

APPOINTED
Tokiko Shimizu, as the first female executive director of Japan's central bank in its 138-year history, on May 11.

LOST
Employer-sponsored health insurance, by nearly 27 million Americans, during the COVID-19 crisis, per estimates released May 13 by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Nearly 6 million of those people are eligible for neither Medicaid nor Affordable Care Act subsidies.

FILED
A **lawsuit, by conservation groups,** against Trump officials, over the use of temporary appointees to run federal land agencies, on May 11.

Little Richard, pictured here circa 1970, received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993

DIED

Little Richard

Rock-'n'-roll progenitor

IN THE 1940S, TEENAGERS WERE JUST ADULTS IN WAITING, busy with responsibilities like going to war. But the luckier teenagers of the 1950s became a kind of royalty, and Little Richard—who died on May 9 at age 87—welcomed them with an embrace of raucous, peacock splendor. In 1955, his "Tutti Frutti" hit like a glitter bomb of self-expression, opening with a lomp-bomp-bomp that would be rock 'n' roll's Big Bang. Everyone who followed—an eternally scrolling list that includes the Beatles, Elton John and, of course, Prince—owes him a debt.

To anyone who would listen, and to those who wouldn't, the man who was born Richard Wayne Penniman, in Macon, Ga., often boasted that he invented rock 'n' roll. But is it a boast if it's true? His splashy but elegant piano attack, his voice as raw as a hungry kiss: Little Richard was carnal but never vulgar, and his personal style—the pencil mustache, the metallic suits, the pompadour reaching toward Heaven—spoke to the man inside the woman and the woman inside the man. He showed the world what it meant to be yourself, at a time when that was much harder than it is today. Any among us who ever wanted to scream, shout or wear a sequin: we are all children of Little Richard.

—STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

DIED

Roy Horn

Man of magic

By Penn Jillette

IT CAN'T BE OVERSTATED how important Roy Horn, who died at 75 of COVID-19 complications on May 8, was to Las Vegas. Before Siegfried & Roy, magicians would have a spot on a variety show. You'd never have 90 minutes of magic, and they had to fight really hard to get there.

Although our tastes seem polar opposite—Siegfried & Roy did operatic shows full of glitter and wild animals, and Penn & Teller is kind of a chamber-music show—the idea of partnership is a big connection. I once did an interview and said rather goofily that I was the Roy of Penn & Teller. Later, I was in New York City, and all of a sudden I heard this German accent yelling, "You are the Roy of Penn & Teller!" I turned around, and there's Roy with his entourage and yak-skin jacket: "I'm the Penn of Siegfried & Roy!"—and then this huge hug and this laughing and this little dance.

Roy's legacy is all of Vegas. When you're talking about the taste of Vegas, you're talking about Roy. Whether you're being kind or unkind, your view of this city is informed by him.

Jillette is a magician

Sands, carrying boxes of food and cleaning supplies to Navajo Nation members in need

SAHAR KHADJENOURY

Leading the Utah Navajo COVID-19 Relief Program, **Pete Sands** is a lifeline for his community. Here's what he's seeing, in his own words

WHEN THE UTAH NAVAJO HEALTH SYSTEM FIRST CAME together, with administrators and the board members watching this virus, there was just something that kind of spoke inside all of us, saying, "This is going to come here." The Navajo Nation already has high factors of diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, a lot of the health risks. And we knew if this comes here, it's going to devastate the Navajo Nation, and that's what it did.

At the end of February, I started the relief program, down here on the Navajo reservation in Montezuma Creek, Utah. Before this, I was the health system's media guy. I have a band and did some work on *Yellowstone,* the TV show, but I'm from this community; I grew up here. There were a lot of programs at the clinic that a lot of community members didn't know about, and they wanted me to help get the word out. So once I did that, the community kind of saw me as a liaison.

On the reservation, a lot of homes don't have running water or electricity. So our focus when we started was to help people who are living in superrural areas. We have a drive-up service where people can come to pick up food, but we also have a home-delivery system. Where we live right now has become the hot spot on the Navajo Nation, so we go to a lot of homes that are quarantined. We get names from other local health districts or the behavioral-health programs. They know about the elderly people who live deep in the canyons and have nobody, or if they're taking care of a disabled child. It's still cold here at night, so we deliver firewood. We haul water for livestock and for drinking, and we give out a lot of food packages.

We focus on the Utah part of Navajo Nation, which is huge. The landscapes are different—some are desert terrain, some of it is like Navajo Mountain. There are people who live in places that are so far away from the nearest town, who have lived there for generations. They need help. The clinic gave me a brand-new Toyota Tundra like a month ago with only 100 miles on it. Now it's at almost 10,000. People talk about grassroots—I mean, this is pure grassroots. We're trying to work with people locally and help each other out.

PART OF WHAT PEOPLE appreciate is that they see me out there. They see me deliver firewood myself that I chopped. I'm at their house at 10 o'clock at night when they called their case manager or therapist who works with the clinic to say, "We really need some food."

It's a tough job. You go to these households where people are sick, and you can't help them, you can't touch them. Some of them are old and some of them are little kids, and all you can do is look through the window. You can just see a desperation in their eyes. Sometimes people are just lonely. Especially when they're so far out, they just want someone to sit and talk for a little bit.

They used to see us as just this clinic. Now people know that we're more than that. They know that the clinic is there for them, for their well-being. For them to be able to be seen for illness, for mental health, or if they're hungry or cold. That tightness of the community is what's really come through.

[Now that Utah is reopening] it feels like everything we're trying to preach is falling on deaf ears. You can't stop people from coming onto the reservation. It's disheartening. I understand why people want to open businesses. But this is a time where there's something that's smarter, faster than us: this virus.

All we can do is focus on our part of the country and try our best to keep the virus from spreading. Right now's a good time for people to really start working together. —*As told to* ABIGAIL ABRAMS ☐

FRONTLINE HEROES

A recurring series spotlighting the people keeping us safe—and our world moving—during the pandemic

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The trailblazing architect **Rem Koolhaas** mulls the empty spaces in a suddenly frozen world

By Belinda Luscombe

REM KOOLHAAS, THE PRITZKER PRIZE–WINNING Dutch architect, author and academic, has long had a beef with airports. It's not the same beef that everyone else has with airports—the Cinnabon smell, the brusqueness of security, the $7 snack. Koolhaas' beef with airports is that they've lost their sense of purpose.

"Airports used to be highly rationalized spaces that simply served to take you efficiently from one place to the plane," Koolhaas says on a landline from his office in Rotterdam. The process, in his mind, used to be very logical. "Arrivals, luggage, customs, blah blah blah."

But airports now are made up of what he has named *junk space.* "You are basically almost forced to enter the bowels of a mostly financial configuration in order to be exposed to the maximum amount of shopping," he says. The serpentine layout that herds passengers through a mazelike mall creates almost a "permanent sense of crowding," he notes, "with much less freedom to make our own choices and to maintain our own distances."

Airports are just one among the many, many public spaces that may have to be rethought, reorganized and redesigned in the era of pandemics, and Koolhaas believes it is way overdue. Also on his back-to-the-drawing-board list: cities, especially those that have no purpose but to attract people. "The problem is that in the last 20 or 30 years, cities have become gathering spaces for relatively affluent people and for tourists," he says. "There has been a kind of really drastic transformation of the point of cities, that we didn't really pay enough attention to."

The architect who rose to fame largely for a book, *Delirious New York,* that celebrated New York City for its density and crowdedness has now turned his attention to less inhabited spaces, especially the countryside. To him, the gathering of more than 50% of the world's population into metropoles that occupy just 2% of the world's land mass was a problem long before anybody knew what the phrase *social distancing* meant.

It was one of the themes of his recent exhibition at the Guggenheim, "Countryside," which looked at the curious disregard and abandonment of the more rural parts of the planet. Because of the pandemic, the museum closed in March less than a month after the show opened, at around the same time people in cities began to wish they lived somewhere emptier and to suddenly wonder where their food came from.

KOOLHAAS QUICK FACTS

Talent incubator
Many notable architects got their start in Koolhaas' office, including Jeanne Gang, Zaha Hadid and Bjarke Ingels.

Harvard professor
Koolhaas runs a graduate-level research project on cities at the design school.

Fashion promoter
He often collaborates with Miuccia Prada: "In fashion, you can create a masterpiece in two days. It's much more disciplined than architecture."

Koolhaas manages, just, to refrain from gloating. "It would be opportunistic if I said either, I told you so, or, basically, You can now tell that [cities] are actually really dangerous environments to live in," he says. "I think that it's simply slightly reinforcing the argument that it's incredibly important to begin to look not necessarily away from cities but at the neglect of the countryside."

One of the overlooked roles open spaces often play, he notes, is as locations for vast, highly automated factories, data operations and fulfillment centers for companies such as Amazon, Apple and Google. And as online ordering and virtual meetings become life-protecting necessities, these behemoth structures have become ever more important. Even before the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, Koolhaas was calling for architects to take on their design.

"Our entire profession is geared toward the values and demands and needs of human beings," he said back in February at his exhibition opening. "But all over the world, these huge mechanical entities are now appearing. They are typically enormous, typically rectangular, typically hermetic." They also, occasionally, share space with humans. "We need to conceive of architecture that accommodates machines and robots, maybe as a priority," Koolhaas says. "And that then investigates how robots and human rights might coexist in a single building."

AT 75, KOOLHAAS is old enough to remember the difficulties and privations of the post–World War II years in Europe. Having spent some of his childhood in Indonesia, he's also familiar with the havoc communicable diseases can play on a health system that is not prepared. So some of the new realities of life under a pandemic are reminiscent of his younger years.

Others, he is struggling with. Creativity, he says, is impossible in complete solitude. These days, Koolhaas spends about half his time on the building part of his practice, known as OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture),

MATTIA BALSAMINI—CONTRASTO/REDUX

‘We need to conceive of architecture that accommodates machines and robots, maybe as a priority.’

REM KOOLHAAS

and half of it on the research and theory part of his practice, which puts together books and exhibitions. For both those approaches, he needs other people. “In terms of work and working without human interaction, it is very, very noticeable to me that for creativity, interaction is key,” he says, before offering up one of the syntactically complicated sayings for which he has become known. “For anything that will be necessary to create an exception, or a moment of genuine inspiration, human intercourse is necessary.”

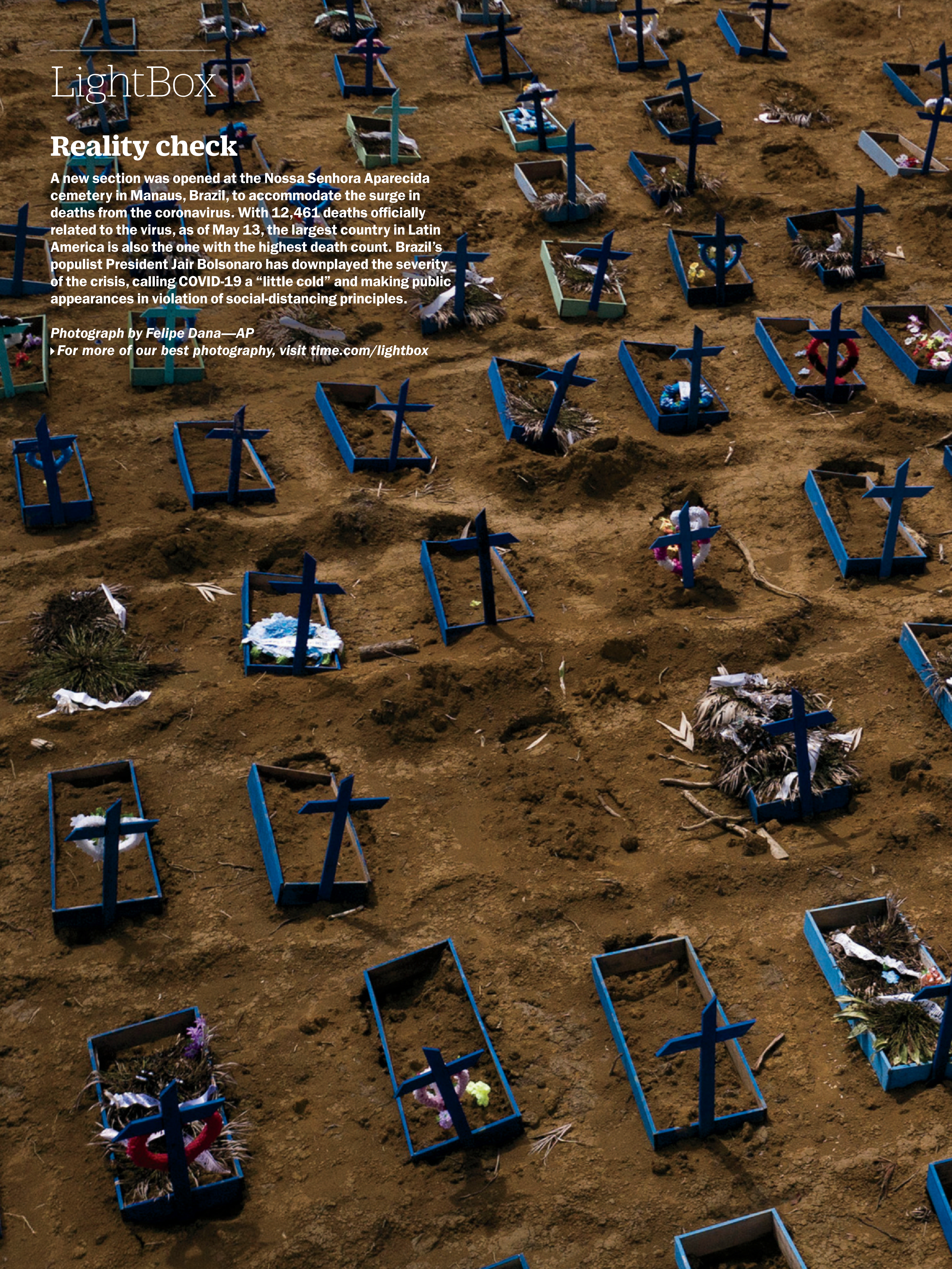
If there is a theme to Koolhaas’ body of work—which has spanned buildings in cities as diverse as Moscow, Milan, Beijing, Seattle and Seoul, as well as at least 10 books (he co-authors many), it is this: he’s drawn to that which he feels has been given insufficient attention by his peers, whether it’s a point of view, a building material, the retail experience or a city in Nigeria. “I basically tried to put on the agenda issues and aspects that I felt were being ignored,” he says of his career. A project in his hometown of Rotterdam is designed so the best view is from passing cars. A museum in Moscow’s Gorky Park is an abandoned restaurant clad in lowly polycarbonate plastic. He wrote a book on Lagos and co-edited the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping.*

WHILE KOOLHAAS MAY have foreseen some of the challenges and shortcomings that the pandemic has accentuated, he was caught by surprise by the lack of the preparedness of Western nations. Having built perhaps his most iconic building, the headquarters of the Chinese state-owned television network, CCTV, in Beijing, he was dismayed that China was considered an outlier. “There’s a form of Sinophobia, where the distance between the West and China is constantly increasing,” he says. “Blatant alarms that were going off there were not really received here.”

He’s also taken aback, but this time pleasantly, at how quickly the world changed when the gravity of the situation did finally become clear. “It has surprised me enormously the incredible financial means that have been released,” he says, especially given how difficult it has been to get any resources directed to the large changes in the climate. Similarly, he was impressed by “the incredible flexibility that people have shown in terms of changing their behavior in the most radical way.”

Architects are both students and catalysts of human behavior; they want to understand it and to change it. Koolhaas has lost some of his faith that architecture alone can solve problems. “But I do believe,” he says, “and I’ve had the luck of experiencing in person, that sometimes you get to combine a number of demands and a number of needs, in a particular context, in a way that creates an event that is deeply satisfying for quite a long time.” In other words, sometimes Koolhaas’ crazy schemes have worked, and that is enough. ☐

Reality check



A new section was opened at the Nossa Senhora Aparecida cemetery in Manaus, Brazil, to accommodate the surge in deaths from the coronavirus. With 12,461 deaths officially related to the virus, as of May 13, the largest country in Latin America is also the one with the highest death count. Brazil's populist President Jair Bolsonaro has downplayed the severity of the crisis, calling COVID-19 a "little cold" and making public appearances in violation of social-distancing principles.

Photograph by Felipe Dana—AP

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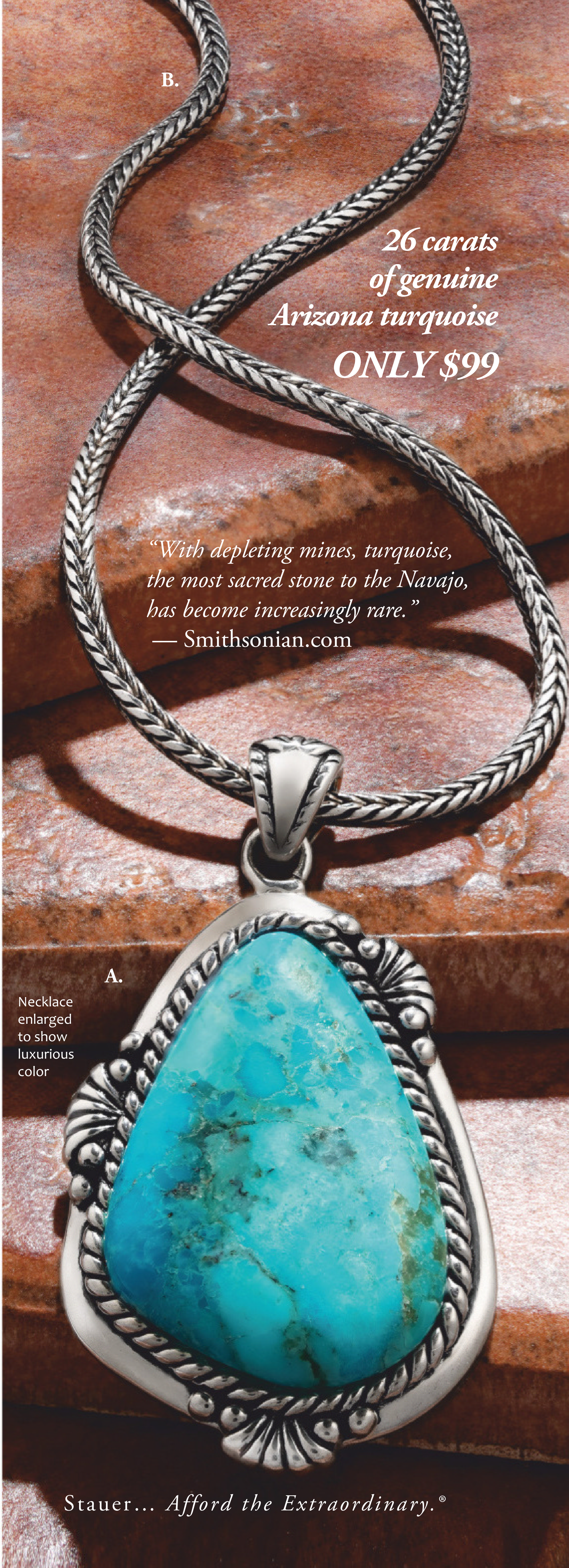

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HEALTH

WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE

By Jeffrey Kluger

Welcome to two Americas—and two American health crises: the coronavirus epidemic of 2020 and the polio epidemic of 1916. Now, as then, there are no proven cures. Now, as then, there is no vaccine. Now, as then, there is plenty of hooey going around—but there's a lot to learn from that long-ago tragedy too. ▶

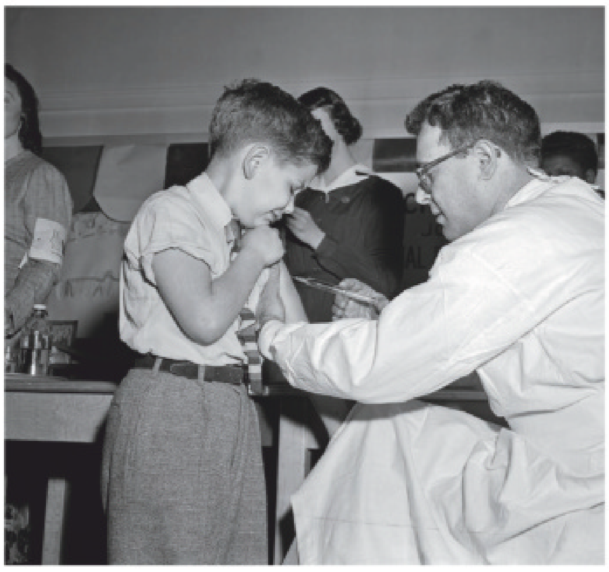
INSIDE

WHY WE NEED THE WHO RIGHT NOW

COLLEGE SENIORS ON MISSING COMMENCEMENT

DIFFICULT DECISIONS AT THE END OF LIFE

Comparisons are more commonly drawn between the 1918 flu pandemic and today, but the polio outbreak is actually the more apt one. Today, we hear nonsense about injecting disinfectant into the body to battle coronavirus. Back then, it was hanging mothballs around your child's neck to prevent the scourge popularly known as infantile paralysis. Today, there's the hyping of the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine to battle a disease it was not meant to battle. Back then, it was mixing a paste made of wintergreen, Russian thyme, and the oils of rosemary, cajeput and wood—and rubbing them into the muscles.



A boy is vaccinated during a field trial of the Salk polio serum in 1954 in New York City

If you think sheltering in place in your climate-controlled, wi-fi-streaming, cable-equipped home seems tough, try doing it in a blistering summer before there was air-conditioning or Internet—or even television.

As Mark Twain is said to have said, history does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes, and the two epidemics, 104 years apart, are forming a tidy couplet. New York and other cities shut down then as they have shut down now. In the first week of July 1916 alone, 552 children in New York's five boroughs were stricken with polio, and more than 1,000 the second week. Even before that feverish fortnight, the city health commissioner, Haven Emerson (the great-nephew of the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson), made it his business to keep New Yorkers apart. Children under 16 were not permitted in crowded public places. Open-air movies, a new summer attraction, were forbidden. Fourth of July celebrations were canceled.

As COVID-19 might be, polio is a seasonal disease, though the poliovirus prefers the hot months, and SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is at least thought to prefer the cool ones. Now, as in 1916, the push for a vaccine is thus a cyclical one—a race against a viral time bomb set to go off by the calendar.

WHILE THE CLAMOR for a vaccine was loud after the polio epidemic of 1916, the wait was long. It was not until the summer of 1935 that there was hope, in the form of two great field trials: one by Dr. Maurice Brodie and Dr. William Park of the New York City department of health and one by Dr. John Kolmer of Temple University in Philadelphia.

In Kolmer's case, the vaccine involved using a weakened poliovirus, one that wouldn't cause symptoms but would still confer immunity. In the case of Park and Brodie, the technique involved a killed virus that would work more or less the same way.

Nine thousand children were injected with the Park-Brodie vaccine that summer, and 10,000 with Kolmer's version. Both were disasters, in some cases causing the very polio they were intended to prevent, in others leading to infections and inflammations. Six children died of vaccine-caused polio. In November, Kolmer and Brodie were summoned to the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association for an open shaming delivered in twin reports, one of which ended with the damning conclusion that Kolmer might as well be guilty of murder.

"Gentlemen," Kolmer said in response, "this is one time I wish the floor would open up and swallow me."

It would be another 20 years, until 1955, before Dr. Jonas Salk would develop a successful killed-virus vaccine. That meant 39 years between the epidemic of 1916 and the moment when science would at last have its way with the disease.

Americans in lockdown now might seem almost spoiled to be chafing at being told to wait up to 18 months before a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 becomes available (though optimistic projections suggest that the breakthrough could come as early as January). But as science changes, expectations do too. We can now make vaccines faster than ever.

Still, some things remain the same. Americans separated by scourges more than a century apart share the same fear, the same worry, the same loneliness in lockdown and grief for lost loved ones. Diseases don't change their character, and human beings don't much either. But science presses ahead, and in our impatient 21st century, that's something for which we should be deeply grateful. ☐

SHORT READS

▸ *Highlights from stories on* **time.com/ideas**

Quenching hell's fire

Although most Christians believe in heaven and hell, Jesus did not teach that your soul goes to everlasting bliss or torment, according to Bart D. Ehrman, author of *Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife:* **"Jesus stood in a very long line of serious thinkers who have refused to believe that a good God would torture his creatures for eternity."**

Uncharted territory

The pandemic makes us feel as if we don't have control, but we never really did, writes Stephanie Wittels Wachs, host of the *Last Day* podcast: **"We can't go back to what was. We can only respond to what is and take steps toward what we hope will be."**

Worst of times

As more and more people struggle to pay their rent and provide food for their families, Lauren Sandler, author of *This Is All I Got: A New Mother's Search for Home,* argues it didn't have to be this way: **"When our country could have afforded to mend our national safety net, we shredded it instead."**

POLIO: BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; DISHWASHER: ILLUSTRATION BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

THE RISK REPORT

Why we need the WHO, despite its flaws

By Ian Bremmer

COVID-19 HAS A WAY of making both individuals and governments feel vulnerable, and it's only human to look for someone to blame when things go badly wrong. That's why it sometimes seems as if willingness to absorb abuse is a natural part of the World Health Organization's mandate.

The international agency has certainly come in for its share of criticism, and some of it is warranted. The WHO was slow to publicly recognize the scale of the threat posed by the outbreak in China. Though the organization declared the virus a global health emergency in January, Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus didn't begin characterizing it as a pandemic until March 11, when the virus had already been confirmed in at least 114 countries. In part, that's probably because, like most large bureaucracies, the WHO is a cautious institution.

It's also fair to criticize the WHO's relationship with Taiwan. China continues to condemn any recognition of Taiwan as an independent nation. Taiwan is unable to efficiently share information about its own outbreaks directly with the WHO because of China's demands that Taiwan be denied formal representation within the U.N. system. Respecting China's diplomatic sensitivities is one thing. Respect for the health of Taiwan's nearly 24 million people is another.

The Trump Administration says that the WHO's greatest failure is in accepting Chinese lies about containment of the virus in its earliest days. In January, Tedros praised "China's commitment to transparency and to supporting other countries. In many ways, China is actually setting a new standard for outbreak response." This despite credible charges that China hid the scale of the virus and punished Chinese doctors who publicly warned that risks were growing.

On April 14, citing the above mentioned criticisms of the WHO's relationship with China, President Trump announced that Washington would temporarily suspend U.S. funding while his Administration reviewed the organization's handling of COVID-19. That matters, because the U.S. is (by far) the largest single contributor to the WHO's budget.

WHAT LESSONS SHOULD we take from the COVID experience about the future of the WHO? If Washington has no use for a multinational institution composed of medical professionals who identify, map and track public-health emergencies that can kill millions of people, China might be happy to step in. China, which didn't stop possibly infected citizens from traveling the world, could use its financial muscle to build a new global health agency, one that could benefit from China's unique position in the global medical-supply chain to become first responders to health crises.

Call Beijing a liar, and the resulting eviction of WHO officials from China could kill millions

The U.S. is the biggest investor in the current WHO, but China is the dominant investor and trade partner in many of the countries most vulnerable to a pandemic. A Chinese version of the WHO would not allow the transparency that the world needs from such an organization.

Today's WHO, like all multinational institutions working in politically sensitive areas, has big flaws. Like any U.N. agency, it can't function without the goodwill of the governments it must rely upon for access. The WHO can be accused of not calling out China for its first critical response to this virus, but the organization could not study the virus from outside Wuhan. Call Beijing a liar, and the resulting eviction of WHO officials from China could kill millions.

Scrapping this organization would leave us racing to build a new one before the next crisis.

HOME

Know thy dishwasher

Rarely has a device saved as much time, and caused as many arguments, as the dishwasher. In these trying homebound times, here are five mistakes to avoid.

Prerinsing: Surveys suggest 90% of people wash off their plates completely before loading them; it needs to stop. The enzymes in the detergent are designed to attach to food, so prerinsing is the equivalent of watering your lawn while it's raining.

Overcrowding: As with time at home, more is not always better. Adding that last plate or whisk will have you pulling half-soiled items, dripping with water, out of the machine in the morning.

Facing everything the same way: Plates should face the center, where the water comes from. Items should fit together without touching. Social distancing matters in dishwashing too.

Adding too much detergent: If you use a quality product, a half-full dispenser is enough. If you're cheaping out on detergent, quantity won't help. It's like spending lockdown with a person you're not attracted to—still no chemistry.

Squabbling over this: People matter more than machines. Anyway, you can always quietly rearrange things.

—*Belinda Luscombe*

PERSONAL FINANCE

Tax questions that rise as incomes fall

By Kevin Kelleher

AS UNEMPLOYMENT REACHES ITS highest level since the Great Depression, millions of Americans have been left scrambling to get by. As of early April, almost a third of U.S. adults were unable to afford necessities like rent or food, according to an Urban Institute survey; the crisis is bound to deepen.

For many, financial survival could come down to desperate measures, like dipping into retirement savings or borrowing money from loved ones. While it's not easy to think long term in emergencies, financial experts say it's important to plan ahead even when taking drastic steps. "It's pretty easy for people to overlook tax considerations if they don't have the financial awareness around them," says Chad Hamilton, a financial planner at wealth-management firm Brown and Co.

Here are some options to consider when searching for emergency finances, along with important tax rules to know:

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS More than 33 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits over the past seven weeks. Those benefits have been expanded by the CARES Act, which also included onetime stimulus payments for millions of taxpayers.

14.7%

The unemployment rate in April as many nonessential businesses closed amid the COVID-19 outbreak

However, unemployment (and severance) benefits are typically considered taxable income. So, says Hamilton, "don't just assume the income on your unemployment or severance payments are tax-free." Instead, check with an accountant to avoid surprises come tax season. (The stimulus payments won't be taxed.)

RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS AND OTHER ASSETS Personal-finance experts have long considered the proverbial nest egg to be sacrosanct. In part, that's because early withdrawals from a tax-advantaged retirement account, like a 401(k) plan or an IRA, are heavily penalized. But the CARES Act temporarily waives that penalty for people who claim hardship caused by COVID-19. Withdrawals will still be taxed, but people will have three years to replenish their withdrawn funds, and the tax can be paid ratably over three years. Another option: those with a Roth 401(k) can withdraw their contributions "at any time and for any reason without taxes or penalties," says Christine Benz, director of personal finance at Morningstar. But withdrawing earnings the account has generated may trigger penalties.

Experts still see dipping into retirement accounts as a last resort. Early withdrawals can jeopardize retirement plans, while selling assets ahead of a recovery could mean missing out on future growth. Matthew Kenigsberg, VP of investment and tax solutions at Fidelity, suggests tapping rainy-day funds before retirement accounts. For those facing unexpected medical expenses, drawing from a health savings account (HSA) or a flexible spending account (FSA) can also be an option. Furthermore, people who have assets like stocks or funds in taxable accounts can sell low and deduct any capital loss, a practice known as tax-loss selling.

FAMILY GIFTS AND LOANS For those who are able, it's natural to want to help struggling friends and family. But gift givers need to be tax-smart—gifts must be reported if they total more than $15,000 in a year, for instance. Still, it's unlikely that gifts will be taxed unless a giver exceeds the lifetime gift-tax exemption of $11.58 million.

Likewise, lenders should carefully document their transactions, including the amount, interest rate and terms of repayment. (While some may balk at the idea of charging interest payments to a loved one, the IRS sees it differently: an interest-free or below-market loan may be subject to taxes and penalties or treated as a gift.) Lenders also have to report any interest they receive as taxable income. But those borrowing money from friends or family generally don't have to worry about tax implications.

WHETHER PURSUING ANY OF THESE options or taking a different approach, it's wise to plan ahead and avoid rash decisions that could cause further pain when it's time to file taxes next year. People should talk to a financial planner, accountant or other expert about their individual situations too. "It's important in times like this to consult with a tax adviser to make sure that you're dotting all your *i*'s and crossing all your *t*'s," says Kenigsberg.

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK SMITH FOR TIME

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EDUCATION

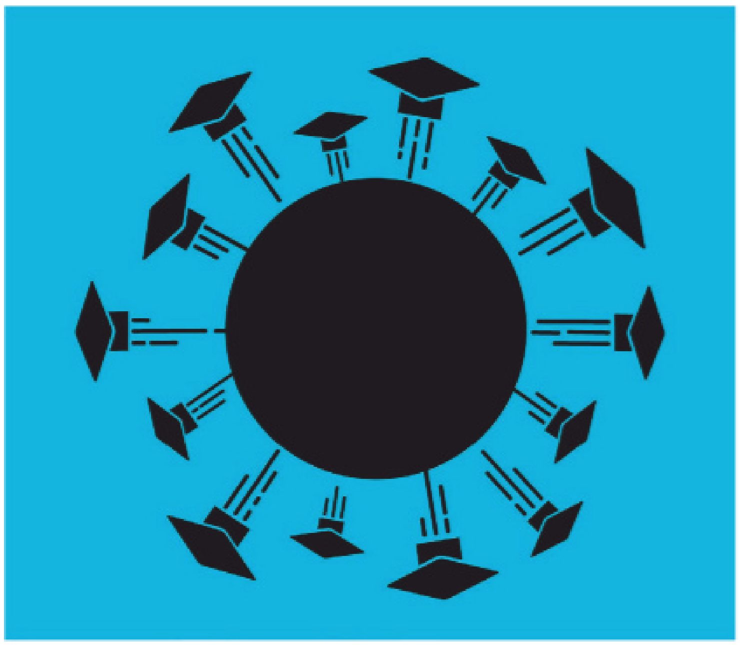
What's lost without commencement

By Kristine E. Guillaume and Jeremy Tsai

THIS SPRING, MOST GRADUATING COLLEGE STUDENTS WILL not participate in a traditional in-person celebration. Universities swiftly acted as coronavirus spread across the country: students went home early, classes moved online, and commencement ceremonies were canceled or postponed.

Over the next month, former President Barack Obama will deliver multiple commencement speeches, something thousands of students had called for as they looked for guidance and comfort in this unprecedented time. But it's hard not to miss real commencement. Days before we evacuated campus, many of us had turned in our senior theses, anticipating graduation and the last days of campus life. For months, our lives had been confined to libraries and academic meetings. "We'll hang out after," we'd said. Instead, we packed our bags, said numb goodbyes and fled to separate parts of the world.

Though the speeches are often riddled with trite remarks (Don't be afraid to fail! Follow your dreams!), we admit we find ourselves craving those clichés and the moments when speeches rise above them. In 2008, J.K. Rowling delivered the Harvard commencement address, defending the importance of perseverance and imagination: "We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already; we have the power to imagine better." Rowling's speech gave a sense of agency over our lives. Messages like this, delivered over the years by the likes of John F. Kennedy, Oprah Winfrey and Steve Jobs, have propelled graduates into the future, helping them recognize who they are becoming and how that squares with who they want to be.



For the Class of 2020, our college experience has ended abruptly. To make matters worse, we're plunging headfirst into a public-health nightmare compounded by potentially the worst recession since the Great Depression. Some of us will be the first in our families to graduate from college. Many have overcome other great barriers to achieve this milestone. But as the "real world" knocks on our door, we crave nothing more than a little direction and a little tradition.

For graduating college students, commencement speeches—the punchy one-liners; inspirational anecdotes; and calls to action from celebrities, entrepreneurs and politicians—are a rite of passage. Though these speeches gesture toward the future, they also commemorate the past four years. In these final moments, we recognize that we influenced our schools as much as they influenced us. "I always wanted first to say we notice that you were here," former Harvard president Drew Faust told us, describing what she wanted to accomplish in a commencement speech. "You've mattered here, and we know that you've been here, and there are things that we shared together during these years that make you not just yet another class of students."

As the 'real world' knocks on our door, we crave nothing more than a little direction and a little tradition

STUDENTS WON'T put on caps and gowns and listen to celebratory speakers this year. Curbing the pandemic requires that we all do our part. The decision to send students home and cancel or postpone in-person commencements has likely saved the lives of students, professors, faculty and staff.

While virtual commencements are all many of us can have in this time, watching them through screens, thousands of miles apart, will be different. Postponed ceremonies will be different too. We won't all be in the same place in our lives: excited, scared, hopeful during the bittersweet end of college.

But that doesn't mean they won't mean anything. "For some campuses like ours, students were away on spring break," University of Virginia president James E. Ryan said in an April interview. "They didn't have four or five days to say goodbye. So, for many of them, this will be the first time they've seen each other since March ... I think it will be a remarkably special occasion." And he's right: we'll all be together again, some time when the curve has flattened and things are better. Once more, we will sit on library steps, fill quad lawns and take in one another's company.

On our last day on campus, March 15, two of our friends geared up for a 16-hour drive to Michigan. We gathered around their rented minivan to say goodbye. They pulled away from the curb, then pulled back in, as if we didn't really have to leave each other. Finally, they drove off campus and disappeared into the world. Those of us who remained held each other close, hopefully not for the last time.

Guillaume and Tsai are seniors at Harvard University

ILLUSTRATIONS BY NOMA BAR FOR TIME

HEALTH

Painful new choices in end-of-life care

By Pria Anand and Joanna Sharpless

ON GEORGE'S EIGHTH DAY ALONE IN THE ICU, HIS DOCTORS told him he had months to live. With his family listening by phone, the doctors offered two options: he could continue to receive intensive hospital care, with a small chance of getting home before his next medical crisis. Or he could go home with hospice, focusing on comfort and the people he loved.

Though George (a pseudonym) didn't have COVID-19, the pandemic made his decision even more excruciating. In an effort to stop the virus, George's hospital, like others, had enacted policies banning visitors. If George chose the hospital path, it would be weeks before he could see his family in person.

Hospitals today face an impossible predicament regarding visitors for terminally ill patients. On one hand, a visitor might spread the virus within the hospital or become exposed and bring it home. On the other, depriving people of the chance to make life-and-death decisions and say goodbye in person is cruel and may even influence the choices they make.

Many hospitals seek to walk this line by allowing visitors for dying patients, with stringent restrictions. For example, the New York State department of health recommends hospitals permit one visitor for patients expected to die within 24 hours. Some hospitals allow only a single hour-long visit. And even generous policies have unintended consequences: though medical teams don't intend to coerce families into transitioning patients to comfort-focused care before they feel ready, the fact that they cannot visit until their loved one is dying can seem like an incentive.

For families that opt to discontinue ventilators, the calculus becomes more brutal. COVID-19 is especially contagious during the removal of a breathing tube, so many hospitals prohibit visitors during this procedure. If a hospital allows just one visit, families must choose between seeing their loved one before the tube is removed, while she is guaranteed to be alive, and waiting until after—with the uncertain hope of witnessing her final moments.

Physicians are also notoriously inaccurate at predicting when patients will die. When visits are allowed only for an hour, it may be impossible to time a visit with the moment of death.

Before COVID-19, patients sometimes died surrounded by family. Now, one or two people grieve alone

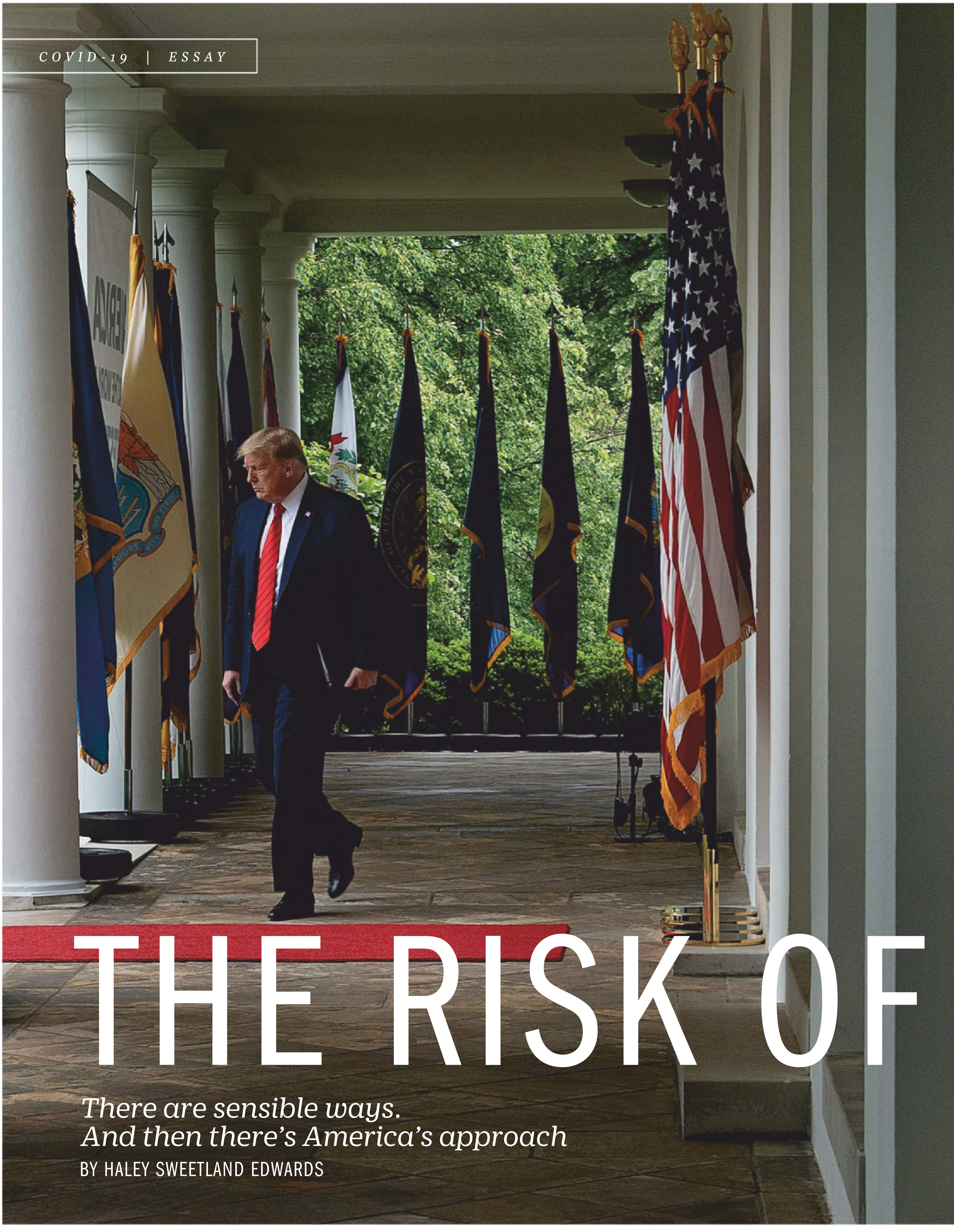
SINCE GEORGE'S TIME was limited, he and his family decided he should come home so they could be together. But hours before he was to leave, his blood pressure dropped. His doctors called his wife and told her he was actively dying. She raced toward the hospital, but George died before she arrived. She was alone when she learned of his death. She wiped tears from above her mask as she visited her husband's body. Then she drove herself home.

Even for families that are miraculously present when a patient dies, the experience is drastically altered. Before COVID-19, patients sometimes died surrounded by family members, who might have found comfort in physical contact. Now, one or two people grieve alone, separated by gloves and gowns.

Medical teams have made impressive efforts to help families spend time together using technology. And many staff risk their own well-being to linger in hospital rooms, holding hands and smoothing brows, filling in for families that can't be there. Still, we cannot underestimate the distress that these policies create for health care workers, who must weigh the trauma of enforcing limitations on end-of-life companionship against the fear that every exception exposes them to danger.

By the time this pandemic ends, hundreds of thousands will have died. Restricting the number of people they had contact with in their final days will save hundreds of thousands more. The value of those lives is incalculable, but many of the saved will still be suffering. We are only starting to understand the reverberations of our patients' isolated deaths and the complicated grief we will be processing for years to come.

Anand is a neurologist at Boston Medical Center; Sharpless is a palliative-care physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center



THE RISK OF

*There are sensible ways.
And then there's America's approach*

BY HALEY SWEETLAND EDWARDS

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI

President Trump arrives at a news conference in the Rose Garden on May 11 wearing no mask, despite CDC guidelines advising Americans to use them

REOPENING

THIS BRUTAL SPRING, THE U.S. FACES TWO GREAT CRISES. OVER THE PAST 14 WEEKS, 84,000 AMERICANS HAVE DIED OF COVID-19.

That's 28 times the death toll of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, more than the U.S. combat deaths in the Vietnam War, and one-quarter of the total global casualties from the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, the national lockdown designed to halt the spread of the disease has pushed 33 million Americans out of work, forced hundreds of thousands of small-business owners to board up their shops and left 1 in 5 children uncertain where they'll find their next meal. It's the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and with some economists forecasting unemployment to soar past 20%, a second one is a real concern.

As the death toll has rung out against a crescendo of economic despair, Americans have had no time to mourn. Instead, we have been pulled into an increasingly heated debate that pits those twin tragedies against each other. In exchange for our jobs, our livelihoods, the ability to pay our rent, how much death are we willing to bear? How many tens of thousands of lives are we willing to sacrifice so that the rest of us can work and live outside our homes? Eager to juice the economy before the November election, President Donald Trump is pushing hard for businesses to reopen. But public-health officials are raising the alarm. On May 12, infectious-disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci, a key member of Trump's own coronavirus task force, told a Senate panel that easing social-distancing restrictions too swiftly risks "multiple outbreaks throughout the country" that will "result in needless suffering and death."

It didn't have to be this way. There's no reason the wealthiest country in the world—the nation that rebuilt Europe, that went to the moon, that claims exceptionalism as its birthright—should have to choose between economic resilience and protecting the lives of its most vulnerable citizens. Countries that acted more quickly to curb the spread of the virus have limited the damage on both fronts. In the early days of their fight against COVID-19, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland tested their populations at nearly 40 times the U.S. rate, per capita, and now have one-fifth the death rate.

Having failed in its initial response, the U.S. now risks risks making matters worse. Despite roughly 1,800 deaths per day of late, and rising infection rates in parts of the country, at least 41 states are easing restrictions or preparing to do so. In many cases, governors are plunging ahead with reopening despite failing to meet key benchmarks established by public-health officials. As a result, draft projections provided to the Federal Emergency Management Agency included a revised forecast for the virus's toll, estimating some 3,000 Americans could be dying per day by June 1—a 9/11 every day.

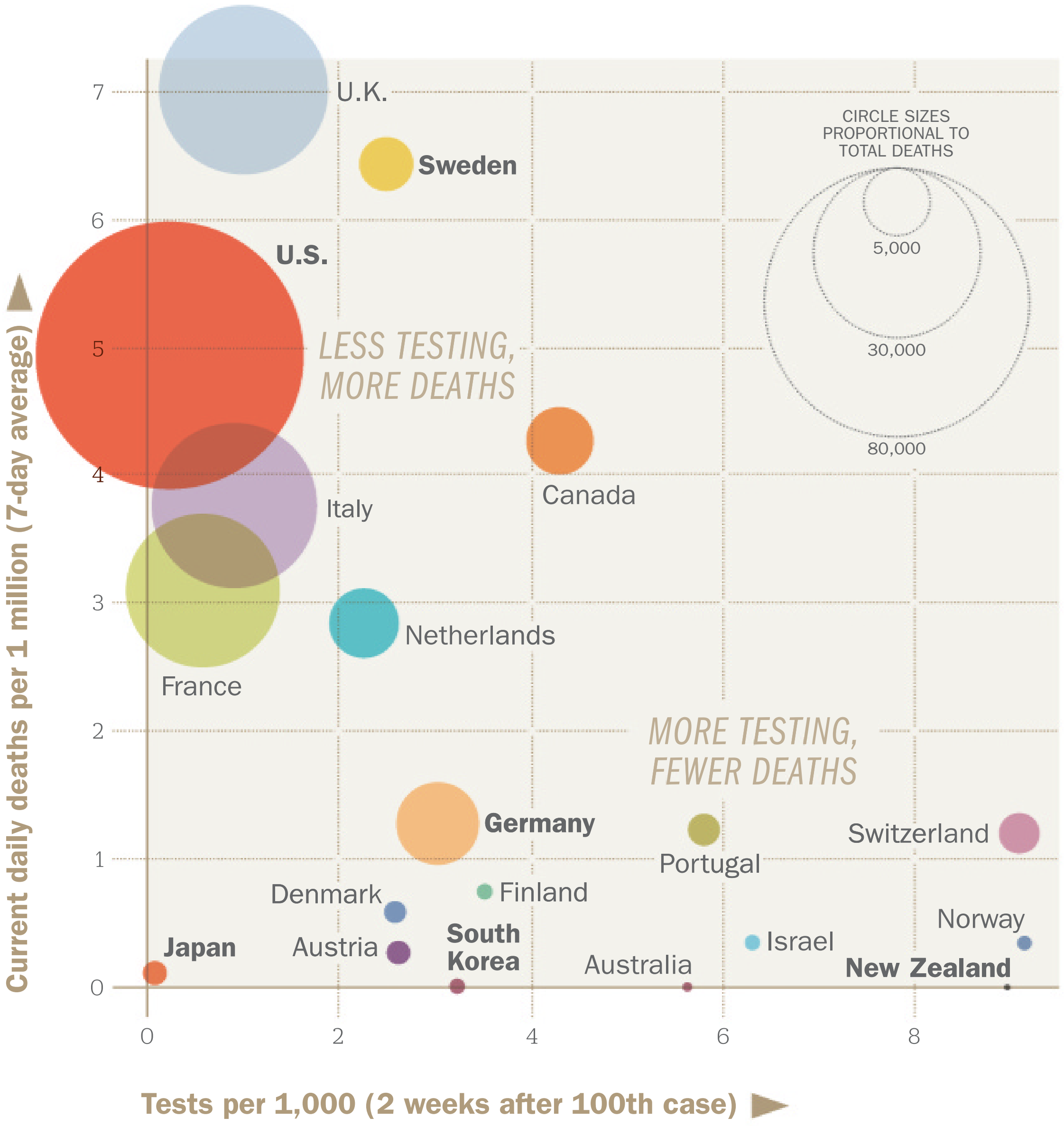
To avoid these shocking death rates, Americans should look at what has worked elsewhere. Industrialized nations in Europe and Asia have begun opening up their economies by relying on continued social distancing, widespread testing, and a network of contact tracing to identify and contain new outbreaks. South Korea built an innovative digital infrastructure to identify and track every new coronavirus case within its borders. Germany set the standard for preventative testing and an incremental, staged plan for reopening.

Experts at the American Enterprise Institute, Johns Hopkins University and elsewhere have laid out detailed steps like these. Together, they would help the U.S. track the spread of the disease in our communities; clamp down on new outbreaks; and arrive at data-driven decisions to facilitate a safe reopening. For now, our leaders are following their recommendations haphazardly at best. If we can't identify our missteps and learn from other countries' successes and setbacks, we risk an even more catastrophic fall.

WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS on some fronts. On May 11, Trump declared that America has "prevailed" on testing. That's not yet clear. But the U.S. is now conducting some 390,000 tests a day—a major jump after a sluggish start. Admiral Brett Giroir, the federal official overseeing coronavirus-testing efforts, told lawmakers in May that the U.S. should be conducting 40 million to 50 million tests every month to provide basic surveillance on the spread of the disease in this country, but it will take us at least until September to reach those

THE CASE FOR EARLY TESTING

Countries that quickly ramped up COVID-19 testing as a containment strategy have lower death rates today than many other nations



U.S.
Despite White House assurances about testing capacity, states had shortages, and people with symptoms went untested

SOUTH KOREA
The government rapidly set up hundreds of test sites, including drive-throughs that became a model for other countries

JAPAN
Instead of mass testing, Japan has focused on targeted testing; this method identifies clusters of cases in order to isolate them

SWEDEN
Unlike European nations that imposed strict lockdowns, Sweden took a lax approach; its death rate recently spiked

GERMANY
With swift testing, broad social-distancing compliance and an efficient medical system, its response was among the world's best

NEW ZEALAND
In aiming to eliminate rather than contain COVID-19, the island nation tested widely and enforced a very strict lockdown

numbers. So we are months behind. But still, the results of ramped-up testing bring cause for cautious optimism. Usually, the more people you test, the more confirmed cases you see, since you catch people who wouldn't normally be tested, including those who are asymptomatic or have just mild symptoms. But in recent weeks, we've seen the opposite: the number of confirmed cases nationwide is declining.

Yet different areas are at different stages in the pandemic. New York and New Jersey are seeing declining numbers, but states in every part of the country, from California to Maine, have watched their infection rates climb. What's more, the main reason the U.S. has begun to slow the spread of the virus is that most of the country has been under stay-at-home orders for nearly two months. Rolling back precisely those policies could usher in a second wave of disease.

As states reopen, public-health officials insist that the only way to contain future outbreaks is through dogged disease surveillance. Officials must identify not only people who have been infected but also who they've come in contact with. Yet the U.S. has so far failed to develop a comprehensive contact-tracing program. Despite congressional funding of $23 million per year since 2016 for biosurveillance and authorization last June of 30 positions for disease surveillance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has yet to even hire for those roles. The pandemic "went beyond the capacity" of the agency's contact-tracing program, CDC director Robert Redfield told lawmakers May 11.

In the absence of a meaningful federal effort, state governments—in partnership with universities, researchers and the National Guard—have taken up the slack. California is now conducting contact tracing in 22 counties and plans eventually to deploy a force of 10,000 state employees. Maryland is partnering with the University of Chicago and a research organization to quadruple its contact-tracing capacity. States like Washington, West Virginia and Rhode Island are leaning on their National Guards to help with similar efforts.

Still, these efforts are meager compared with those of other advanced nations. South Korea's tech-powered contact-tracing program involves GPS-tracking of all new positive cases and wristbands for scofflaws. As a result,

PREVIOUS PAGES: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

SOURCES: OURWORLDINDATA.ORG; JHU CSSE; WORLD BANK GRAPHIC NOTE: THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL VARIATIONS IN HOW TESTS ARE TALLIED FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY. DAILY DEATH RATE IS A SEVEN-DAY AVERAGE ENDING MAY 12.

South Korean officials were able not only to immediately notice a new outbreak this month in Seoul, but to rapidly identify its source (a 29-year-old man with COVID-19 had visited a series of nightclubs), determine the number of newly infected (102) and deduce the total number of possible new cases that had been in contact with the infected individuals (5,500). The cluster was a setback for the nation of over 51 million, which is preparing to reopen its economy and schools. But it also marked something of a success story: officials demonstrated they can react rapidly to contain the virus and limit new outbreaks.

Germany, which has earned praise for its ambitious surveillance testing program, likewise offers a potentially useful road map. In recent weeks, German states have slowly lifted stay-at-home orders, allowing certain types of shops and restaurants to reopen with additional hygiene measures, like installing protection screens for staff and removing salt and pepper shakers from tables. “We can afford a little audacity,” Chancellor Angela Merkel dryly observed on May 6. Limits on social contact will remain in place nationwide until June 5, and even then citizens must wear face coverings and maintain roughly 5 ft. between one another. Meanwhile, public-health officials are randomly testing households and tracing new infections.

SOCIAL DISCORD

Protesters rally in favor of reopening in Huntington Beach, Calif., on May 1

SO IF THE WAY forward is clear, can the U.S. simply copy what’s working elsewhere? The straightforward answer is no. Unlike in places like South Korea, there’s no national reopening plan in the U.S. Instead, 50 governors are charting their own paths. The White House and the CDC have released bare-bones guidance for reopening, but neither entity can dictate what states do; they can only hope that governors choose the right course.

As of early May, that wasn’t happening. More than a dozen governors’ reopening plans appeared to either outright ignore, or interpret very loosely, the Trump Administration’s nonbinding reopening guidelines, according to an Associated Press analysis. At least 17 states that are in the process of reopening, including Georgia, California, Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Texas, failed to meet the White House’s key metric for reopening: a downward trajectory of new cases or positive test rates for at least 14 days.

Much of the blame for that disarray falls on Trump himself. The President has repeatedly undermined the guidance of his own public-health officials, fomented antiquarantine protests on Twitter and politicized cautious positions taken by some governors. On May 7, the AP reported that the Administration had “buried” more detailed CDC advice to states on how to safely reopen.

Trump’s erratic political response to the public-health crisis reflects his own leadership style, but also the larger challenge of America’s cultural idiosyncrasies. Americans are uniquely attached to our civil liberties. It’s difficult to imagine South Korea’s contact-tracing program—a massive, state-run surveillance system that tracks and records the movements of every citizen—flying on U.S. soil. The same is true of Chinese officials’ reopening of Shanghai Disneyland. While the first day back at the Happiest Place on Earth was successful, attendees willingly scanned QR codes on their phones, allowing the government to monitor their exact whereabouts in case of future outbreaks.

It’s equally difficult to imagine Trump, with his disregard for science, embracing an incremental, data-driven approach to reopening. As Germany’s Merkel, a trained scientist, drew praise for her clear-eyed explanations for social distancing, Trump was publicly suggesting Americans might inject disinfectant. Merkel’s government has repeatedly urged wearing a mask in public; Trump has refused to wear one at all, even during an outbreak in his own White House. Asked on May 6 whether reopening rapidly could lead to an explosion of new infections, the President was sanguine. “Hopefully that won’t be the case,” Trump said, adding, “It could very well be the case.”

Health experts say the U.S. will have a better outcome if its reopening is careful. The American mass testing program is just now getting off the ground, and many states’ contact-tracing programs are still in their infancy. We need time to get those programs up and running so that we can find new infections and halt outbreaks.

Taking it slow won’t be easy. Americans will have to watch as the Germans and Australians and Japanese enjoy many of the freedoms this summer that we’re desperate to reclaim. And an incremental approach will come at an economic cost: the rosiest market projections require that Americans flee their houses the moment stay-at-home orders are lifted.

But that seems to be O.K. with most of us. Three out of four Americans say the U.S. should continue trying to slow the spread of the coronavirus, even if it means keeping many businesses closed, a recent Washington *Post*/Ipsos poll found. Even as America’s leaders call for an economic revival, there are signs citizens won’t rush back to public life.

Which may be best for keeping new infections under wrap. As we grapple with the twin tragedies before us, perhaps America can, as it always has, forge its own path. □

DAVID MCNEW—GETTY IMAGES

THE TOOLS WE NEED

A new testing regime will be key to managing COVID-19

BY DR. SCOTT GOTTLIEB

EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW when we'll be safe from COVID-19. The answer is we're probably in for a long fight. We'll face a persistent risk, maybe until we get a vaccine or even after. But that risk can be managed, and reduced, if we focus on helping those at the greatest threat of getting the disease.

Reliable tests for the presence of antibodies (which tell who has had the disease) will be very important. But we also need tests that reveal who is carrying the virus, to find the illness in our communities and get people access to care before individual cases turn into outbreaks and outbreaks into a new epidemic. We have the technology and public-health tools to achieve these goals, and new capabilities are being quickly developed to scale faster testing.

A critical element going forward is the ability to bring accessible, dependable and affordable testing to people who have symptoms or are at risk of contracting the disease. That doesn't mean we need to screen everyone all the time. But for those who are symptomatic or were exposed to the illness—or for those who work in professions or live in communities where there's a higher chance for spread—we need to make sure that testing is available.

We've largely relied on a technology called polymerase chain reaction (PCR), where swabs are used to collect samples, which are then scoured for the virus's genetic material. This RNA is then amplified and analyzed to reveal the presence of active virus. But the whole process takes time, and results may not be available for at least a day.

The supply chain to support these PCR platforms is also stretched, and our network of labs is close to its limit. We're conducting around 300,000 tests a day. Given constraints on logistics and supply chains, the upper limit is probably 500,000.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES are becoming available that will expand testing so that it will be accessible whether you're a large employer, a patient in a community setting or a college student returning to campus.

The key will be matching the right testing solution to the right medical need. The first layer of testing is frontline solutions that offer routine screening right in a doctor's office. These include machines like the Abbott ID NOW test that the White House is currently using, which can give a result in five to 13 minutes. The Cepheid GeneXpert is a highly accurate testing system that generates results at the point of care in 30 to 45 minutes. This month, a rapid test by Quidel was given emergency-use authorization by the FDA. It screens for antigens that the virus emits and gives a result in minutes.

These tests are relatively cheap, easy and fast. Their limitation is that they're highly specific but (with the exception of the GeneXpert) not uniformly sensitive. That means if they say you have COVID-19, you almost certainly do. But sometimes they'll say you aren't infected when you really are. In the hands of a health provider, these point-of-care tests can help rapidly diagnose most patients. For those who get a negative test but have suggestive symptoms, the doctor can send off the PCR-based test as confirmation and wait for the results.

> KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE REQUIRES TESTS THAT ARE EASY, AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE

The next layer of testing is the PCR machines that offer more reliable results but take time to run. They'll continue to have an important role when accuracy counts.

But to enable widespread screening of mostly healthy people (think of a workplace that wants to screen its entire workforce on a regular basis), we need a third layer of tools that allow quick and accurate screening of large populations. For these tasks, you want machines that can screen many people with a high degree of precision, even if they don't have any symptoms. Consider a model where employees would spit into tubes and the samples would be pooled together in groups of 50 or even 100 and tested overnight to see if anyone has coronavirus. If a pooled sample got a hit, the workers could be individually screened using PCR.

I work with technologies and services that can be used for this kind of screening at the workplace. These kinds of platforms are already available, and some large employers are going to be using them to implement broad screening of their workforces.

Keeping people safe requires tests that are easy, affordable and available. We need to make sure that people who work or live in places that put them at higher risk have access.

Gottlieb is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a board member of Illumina and Tempus Inc.; he was commissioner of the FDA from 2017 to 2019

The President's senior adviser **Jared Kushner** on testing, reopening states and the date of the election

BY BRIAN BENNETT

You've been deeply involved in the pandemic response since mid-March, and on April 29, you called the Administration's handling of the pandemic a great success story. Now the U.S. has more counted COVID-19 deaths than any other country in the world. How can this possibly be called a success story?

Let's go back to where we started a couple of months ago when I first got involved and was asked to join the task force. We were seeing the invisible enemy, as the President calls it, starting to head toward the shore.

At the time, the experts and the models predicted that there would be 1.6 to 2.2 million deaths here in America if we weren't able to do mitigation, and do everything possible to get people the hospital capacity we needed. We were watching some very, very scary situations unfold in Europe, where in Italy you had people dying on gurneys in hospitals, unable to get ventilators; you had doctors having to choose between who lived and who died; and for everyone in the Administration it was a real moment where we knew that the challenge coming toward us was really immense.

The President kicked everything into motion. Worked very closely with the Vice President [Mike Pence], Dr. [Deborah] Birx, Dr. [Anthony] Fauci. We came up with a recommended set of mitigation efforts. Fifteen days to slow the spread, which is something that helped hopefully decrease—flatten the curve—and keep the level of hospitalizations and death down. And then in addition to that, we worked very hard to make sure that we were working with the states to figure out how to have surge hospital capacity, get enough ventilators for people, figure out how to surge PPE [personal protective equipment], figure out how to scale testing.

Other countries are way ahead of us on testing. We've finally gotten to a higher level of testing, but why have we been so slow to ramp up?

Slow is a relative term, right? There's never been a challenge like this before. We have a lot of people in the country, and like I find with solving any problem, you need to do a lot of the steps sequentially. So the first steps that we took for testing were to develop the tests, and then after that it was about getting the FDA to work with the private sector and the commercial labs to get the high throughput testing capacity.

Once we had that, the governors are really the CEOs in the different states, and we had to work with all the governors to help them find where all their laboratories were. A lot of the governors I spoke to, they said, "Look, we've never done testing before." And again, that's not usually in the description of being a governor, to figure out how to do large-scale disease testing in a state. For the month of May, every state is on pace to do almost double per capita of what South Korea has done. So again, I think as a country, we're going to look really good in May.

Aren't those state restrictions also because there aren't enough tests to do broader testing and really trace the spread of the virus?

We see testing as one of the keys to unlock the opening. But it's not the only key. If you think about why we shut down initially, a big part of it was the fear of lack of hospital capacity and ventilator capacity. Now going into the fall, the hope is that we have a ton of tests out there. We have a ton of masks and PPE based on the work that the federal government's done. We have a much better understanding as to society for what measures we can take to limit the spread of the virus.

You know that Americans are hurting. I want to ask you about some of Dr. Fauci's comments to the Senate and his warning to states skipping over the checkpoints in the White House guidelines. He said there's a real risk that this may trigger an outbreak that states will not be able to control. What's your response to Fauci's warning?

Look, I think that Dr. Fauci has shown himself to be incredibly knowledgeable. And he understands infectious disease incredibly well. I think you have a lot of policymakers like the President or the governors, who were elected by the people in their states and in their country, to take the input of the experts and professionals and then make decisions weighing a lot of different factors.

So we worked very closely with Dr. Fauci, Dr. Birx, to put forward the pathway to reopen. It was not full of mandates. But it gave guidelines to the states to follow. The most important one is to protect the vulnerable. What we did through data is we looked at what's your return on each mitigation measure. Obviously return means reduction in hospitalization. By far the mitigation measure that has the highest return in lowering hospitalizations is protecting the vulnerable and the people over a certain age and who have symptoms.

TIME100 TALKS

Can you tell the American people that you will not personally benefit from the bailout packages?

What I can tell you is that—again, I don't know the contours of how this stuff impacts me. I have not been managing my personal finances. I've recused myself from any business that I've been involved in. I wasn't that heavily involved in the negotiations of it. So again, as far as I know right now, I have no knowledge of any of this that was designed to help me personally or the President for that matter.

Is there any scenario, including a second outbreak in the fall, where the elections move past Nov. 3?

That's too far in the future to tell. Nothing that I'm aware of now. But again our focus right now is just on getting the country—

The elections will happen on Nov. 3?

It's not my decision to make, so I'm not sure I can commit one way or the other. But right now that's the plan. And again hopefully by the time we get to September, October, November, we've done enough work with testing and with all the different things we're trying to do to prevent a future outbreak of the magnitude that would make us shut down again.

If there's evidence about the origins of the virus coming from a Chinese lab, are you willing to put that on the table?

If that's what the intelligence shows, that will be a major issue that not just America will have to address. That's something the whole world will have to address. But again, this is not a uniquely American problem. You have over 180 countries [and territories] who have had major disruption because of this pandemic, and look, it's caused a lot of damage, a lot of death.

But I do think there are a lot of people right now who want to figure out exactly how this happened. There's a lot of questions that still have not been answered adequately according to the President, and he'll definitely get to the bottom of it, and he'll do what's appropriate.

A lot of Americans as you said are dying every day. People are scared. What do Americans need to be doing over the next several months to protect themselves to get back to work? Do you have a reason for optimism?

I do have a lot of reasons for optimism, and I was saying a couple of weeks ago that I really thought in the month of May, you'd see a lot of states reopening. Now we're at 46 states that are in some different phase of reopening. I think that's a great sign. Everyone will do it at their own pace. I think right now, people have to figure out how to adjust to the new normal.

This interview has been edited and condensed. To watch the full interview, visit time.com/kushner-interview

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM REOPENS

China has begun to emerge from the pandemic. Can it reap the rewards?

BY CHARLIE CAMPBELL/SHANGHAI

PHOTOGRAPH BY HENRI SHI FOR TIME

寄存柜
LOCKERS

Visitors inside Shanghai Disneyland on the day it reopened

IT WAS AN EMOTIONAL REUNION FOR QI XIAOYU, WHO WAS BOUNCING IN ANTICIPATION EVEN BEFORE MICKEY AND DONALD PADDED INTO VIEW. THE 27-YEAR-OLD NURSE VISITED SHANGHAI DISNEYLAND OVER 200 TIMES BETWEEN ITS 2016 OPENING AND ITS CLOSING IN JANUARY DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS.

Qi says regular trips to the theme park boost her mental well-being, which has suffered over the 15 weeks she's spent on the front line of the coronavirus pandemic. Her only respite has been dressing up at home in one of her 20-odd Disney princess costumes, she says, to escape the real world of death in her hospital. "Disney is pure happiness and takes my mind off all the pressure I feel at work," Qi says, grinning behind her face mask as she enters Shanghai's iteration of the Magic Kingdom on May 11, the day it reopened. "Here, everything is wonderful."

If ever the world needed a dose of magic, it's now. But of the dozen theme parks that Disney runs across the globe, only the Chinese park is open today. The reopened facility may be operating at 30% capacity, under strict social-distancing regulations, but in the U.S., all Disney parks remain mothballed. The company has furloughed 100,000 workers, closed stores and theme parks, and put its star-studded box-office productions on ice. Its share price has tumbled by almost a third.

Watching families in Shanghai browse $14 Winnie the Pooh mugs while Americans remain in the grip of the coronavirus, it's hard not to wonder whether the mixed fortunes of this most iconic of American institutions indicate a broader changing of the guard. The world's two biggest economies were already locked in a trade war that could cost the global economy $470 billion. They also spar over intellectual-property theft, cyberespionage, the North Korean nuclear threat and the incarceration of more than 1 million ethnic Muslims in China's Far West. Differences in how each has handled the pandemic may be not only the latest rupture, but the one that shapes the future.

When the coronavirus emerged in December, China acted quickly and forcefully to halt it in its tracks. It ordered a population equivalent to a fifth of humanity to barricade themselves at home, and hoisted up the drawbridge to visitors. Those draconian measures cost China an unprecedented 6.8% drop in GDP in the first quarter, but they worked—the country's official (though disputed) infection count is now below 85,000, compared with 1.3 million in the U.S. In the virus epicenter of Wuhan, final-year students are scheduled to go back to class on May 20. Their parents, like adults across the country, are getting back to work.

In America, President Donald Trump has encouraged states to reopen as they see fit, but the U.S. so far has lagged in providing the tools needed to do that safely—tests to detect the disease and track outbreaks. Over the course of the pandemic, the U.S. has so far tested around 9 million people, less than 3% of its population. Meanwhile, to address a new outbreak in Wuhan, China announced plans to test all 11 million of the city's residents over the space of 10 days.

The U.S. response to COVID-19 has been so muddled, it's not yet possible to say how much of the sluggishness is due to unreadiness, how much to incompetence, and how much to the American system of governance, with its emphasis on individual freedoms over centralized authority. What does seem clear is that the performance of the Chinese system of broad state controls—over both citizens and the economy—offers Beijing a unique chance to steal a march on the future. During a recent tour of China's northern province of Shaanxi, President Xi Jinping instructed cadres to "turn the crisis into an opportunity." How well it succeeds in doing so could have ramifications for the entire world order.

XI ALREADY had grand plans. The President's "China Dream" to take "center stage of the world" includes strategies like Made in China 2025 to upgrade to high-tech manufacturing, and China Standards 2035 to become the dominant writer of rules that govern future technologies. Beijing's new goal, analysts say, is to leverage the pandemic to catalyze 10 years of reform into just two. Speaking in Shaanxi in April, Xi stressed the need to "push forward with investment in 5G, the Internet of things, artificial intelligence, the industrial Internet and other new-type infrastructure."

China already appears to be bouncing back. Its economy—built on a combination of manufacturing expertise, connectivity and first-class infrastructure, plus the world's largest middle class

KEVIN FRAYER—GETTY IMAGES

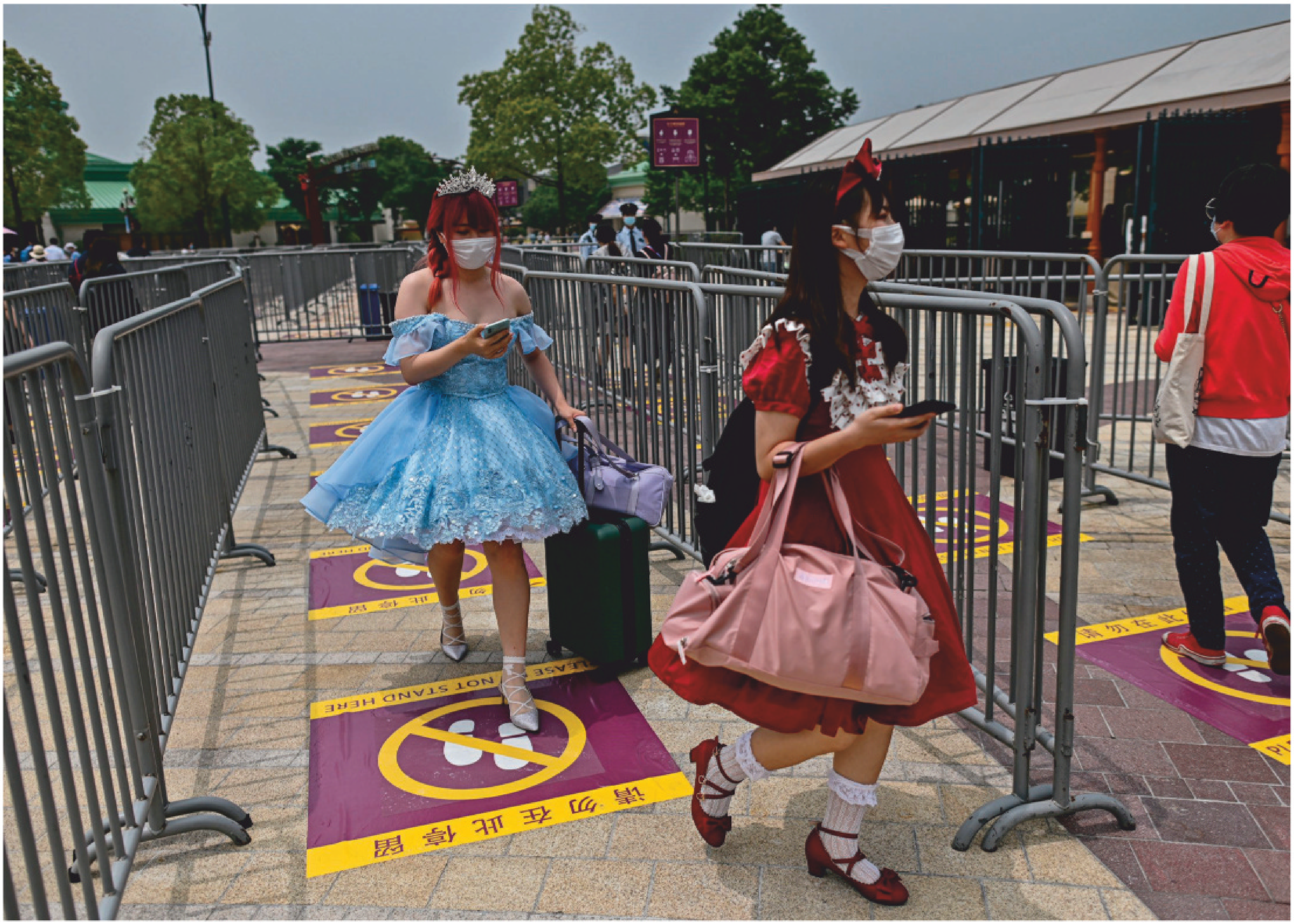
A security guard conducts temperature checks outside a Beijing shopping area on May 3

of domestic consumers—was operating at 87% of typical output on May 12, according to the Trivium National Business Activity Index. In April, though imports were down 14.2%, China's exports were up 3.5% year on year, surpassing predictions largely because of medical products sent overseas.

But the economy won't be the same as before. Crises act like centrifugal forces—the sturdier and well-positioned institutions can survive, but weaker outliers are likely to be ripped to shreds. And while China has taken some measures to rescue companies—tax breaks and loan deferments for small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—no grand cash injection is expected like the $586 billion plowed into state projects following the 2008 financial crisis. "The support policies introduced earlier are adequate," Premier Li Keqiang said May 6. The message appears to be that the true way out of the crisis is investing in innovation.

Some of China's most successful companies are helping choose winners—and reinjecting liquidity into the market. MYbank, run by Jack Ma's online shopping colossus Alibaba, is on track to issue a record $282 billion in new loans to SMEs this year, up nearly 18% from 2019. Delivery service Meituan has been working with state banks to distribute low-interest loans totaling $2.8 billion since early February to 20,000 restaurants and retailers on its platforms, repurposing sales data to quickly assess which clients require the most urgent help.

The pandemic is already providing a springboard for change. Shanghai has published plans to build 100 unmanned factories by 2025, guarding against future labor disruptions. Before the crisis, online health care service JD Health took 10,000 consultations per day. But as hospitals and clinics became swamped with coronavirus patients, that rocketed to 150,000, with the firm's own pharmacy delivering prescription medicines directly to patients' homes. Xin Lijun,



SHANGHAI *Disneyland fans maintain social distancing as they enter the park, which was operating at 30% capacity, on May 11*

CEO of the $7 billion–valued company, says the added convenience of online health care means that muscle memory will remain after the COVID-19 crisis abates, helping ease pressure on China's overstretched, hospital-centric health care system. "People have developed the habit of getting diagnosis and treatment online," Xin says. "This greatly reduces the pressure on traditional hospitals."

For Kai-Fu Lee—a venture capitalist; former Google, Microsoft and Apple executive; and author of *AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley, and the New World Order*—China's tech firms are better positioned to aid recovery as they bridge the gap between the online and physical world. "So that means the Alibaba, JD or the Meituan networks are more structurally advantaged to contribute to the economy because they have their tentacles in the offline part as well."

China is also capitalizing on its leadership in green technology. Its apex Politburo Standing Committee has backed $1.4 trillion spending on so-called new infrastructure, including a wide range of low-carbon technologies, transitioning away from fossil fuels and expanding its economic influence. That funding includes support for technologies specifically aimed at reducing emissions, like electric-vehicle charging, high-speed rail and long-distance power transmission that brings renewable power to cities. "Undoubtedly, China has taken the lead," former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry tells TIME of China's pre-pandemic position in the low-carbon economy.

There are also signs China is using the economic chaos of the pandemic to go on a global shopping spree for new businesses and investments. According to the GlobalData analytics firm, China secured 57 outbound merger and acquisition deals worth $9.9 billion and 145 outbound investment deals worth $4.5 billion globally from January to April. U.S. policymakers say Beijing is exploiting economic vulnerabilities to boost its regional clout, mimicking its acquisition of an 11% stake in Australia's distressed Rio Tinto mining company in 2008 or the strategically placed Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka in 2017. "China is a predatory fire-sale investor," says Patrick M. Cronin, Asia-Pacific security chair at the Washington-based Hudson Institute.

THE PANDEMIC is a "two-sided coin" for China, says Derek Scissors, a Chinese-economy specialist at the American Enterprise Institute. Sure, there may be some opportunities for the country to build up domestic enterprise and acquire beaten-down firms on the cheap, especially in nations desperate for export credit because of cratering demand in the northern hemisphere.

But on the flip side, China's export-reliant economy will struggle while consumers—especially in the U.S.—aren't buying its products. Domestic consumption cannot replace the $2.5 trillion that China sold overseas last year. Although

SHANGHAI: HECTOR RETAMAL—AFP/GETTY IMAGES; ORLANDO: PAUL HENNESSY—SOPA IMAGES/SIPA USA

Magic Kingdom
E L C O M
STOP

ORLANDO *On Disney World's first full day closed, March 16, above, Florida had about 160 cases; by May 13, the state had more than 41,000*

the state's jobs figures are notoriously unreliable, unemployment has surged during the pandemic. Lu Zhiming, whose exporting business M.H. Furniture employs 22 people at a 30,000-sq.-ft. factory in the southern Chinese city of Dongguan, says a slump in demand because of COVID-19 has already forced competitors to lay off staff and he may have to follow suit. "If the pandemic continues, it will be catastrophic for manufacturing."

Some analysts predict the supply-chain vulnerabilities spotlighted by the crisis will accelerate the decoupling process already under way between the U.S. and China. As the Trump Administration has piled sanctions on China, U.S. companies are attempting to shift their supply chains for goods and services to other Asian countries, to avoid exposure to tariffs. The shock of COVID-19 may bring us closer to the moment when Washington and Beijing represent separate, opposing poles of economic influence—especially as the Trump Administration casts China in hostile terms. Trump has described the coronavirus pandemic as the "worst attack" ever on the U.S., in his mind eclipsing even Pearl Harbor and 9/11, and has pushed the so-far unsubstantiated theory that the coronavirus originated in a Wuhan laboratory. In recent weeks, the White House and Labor Department have directed the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, which controls federal retirement funds, to stop investing in Chinese companies, according to documents seen by CNBC. U.S. and British officials have accused Chinese hackers of trying to steal research into COVID-19 vaccines. Several Republican Senators introduced a bill that would allow Trump to sanction China for refusing to cooperate with investigations into the virus's origins.

The U.S. Commerce Department also recently announced new export-control rules to prevent commercial companies in China—as well as Russia and Venezuela—from acquiring sensitive U.S. technology. For the investor Lee, decoupling may be understandable for true national-security reasons, but it stands to egregiously undercut competitiveness "if it's done purely from lack of trust or nationalism."

But Trump officials argue that, with China, national security blends with competitive advantage. Keith Krach, the Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment, says Beijing is using a "three-prong strategy" of "concealment, co-option and coercion" to insert itself into crucial U.S. manufacturing supply lines, procuring proprietary foreign intellectual property (IP) in the process. He says supply chains can include 10 to 20 layers of contractors and subcontractors, making any technology therein vulnerable to theft, given that, he says, Chinese firms are obligated to share trade secrets or intellectual property with their government.

The Trump Administration's goal, says Krach, is to "protect and diversify U.S. supply chains, particularly from overreliance" on China by exploring options like public-private R&D partnerships, special manufacturing zones, and cash or tax incentives to stay in the U.S. "When you build a manufacturing plant in China, you're not just giving the blueprints, you're giving them process engineering and training their labor force," he says. "You can see that, in case after case from … mobile phones to semiconductors to automobiles."

Still, the costs of decoupling would be steep, and unwanted during a time of deep global recession. And the U.S. bullishness fails to account for the reality of how interconnected the two economies still are: China produces 97% of America's antibiotics. Apple, the most valuable U.S. company and the world's first trillion-dollar one, still produces the vast majority of its wares in China. And Chinese enterprise is still finding success in the U.S. Lockdown favorite videoconferencing service Zoom, for example, was created in Silicon Valley by an entrepreneur born in China's Shandong province.

Lu, the furniture manufacturer, doubts any rival could compete with China, in manufacturing at least. He says some friends who shifted businesses to Vietnam because of rising costs have now returned to China, chastened by labor disputes and other headwinds. Meanwhile, his business partners in Copenhagen have to pay staff $25 per hour—10 times more than equivalent skilled workers in China. "With such high costs, how is it possible for manufacturing to return to Europe?"

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the coronavirus, China saw an opportunity to recast itself from being the source of the deadly pandemic to the provider of much-needed aid and expertise. It sent teams of medics to Italy, Iran and Iraq as their outbreaks spun out of control, and personal protection equipment (PPE) to allies and critics alike; on April 2, as rows of field-hospital tents were being built to treat COVID-19 patients in New York City's Central Park, a plane carrying masks, gloves and other supplies arrived in the city from China. It followed up with 1,000 ventilators.

But the hard edges of the soft-power campaign swiftly became apparent. Masks sent to the Netherlands failed to meet international standards and were recalled. Testing kits delivered to Spain and Slovakia turned out to be inadequate. Popular praise lavished on China by grateful ally Italy turned out to be partly fabricated; according to recent analysis by data firm Alkemy, for Italy's Formiche media group, 46% of tweets using the hashtag #forzaCinaeItalia, which translates as "Come on China and Italy," were generated by automated bots. For #grazieCina, meaning "Thanks China," it was 37%.

The ham-fisted attempt at so-called mask diplomacy has proved to be ineffective in changing minds about China. E.U. chief diplomat Josep Borrell warned in a blog post that China's "politics of generosity" concealed "a geopolitical component including a struggle for influence." Beyond Trump's crude attempts to shift blame by labeling COVID-19 the "Chinese virus," a growing coalition of countries now support an investigation into the true origins of the outbreak, including Australia and the E.U. Beijing has pushed back against any suggestion of deliberate deception. "There has never been any cover-up and we do not allow cover-ups," China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told a news briefing April 17.

> 'THIS TRAIN IS ONLY MOVING IN ONE DIRECTION, AND THAT IS TOWARD INCREASED ABILITY TO SURVEIL AND CONTROL.'
>
> —**Ker Gibbs**, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai

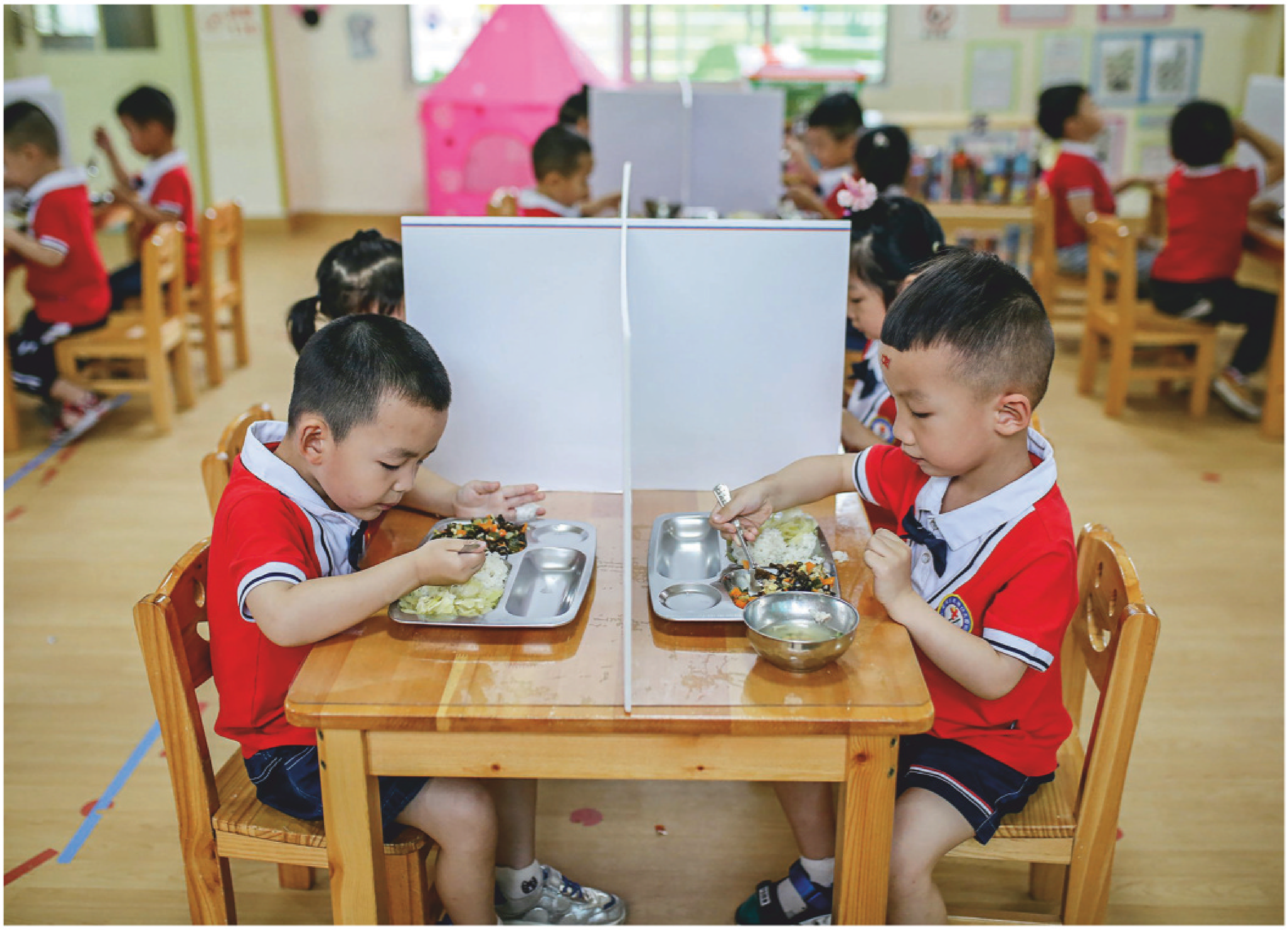
The attempt to pose as a munificent superpower is in line with China's broader attempts to fill the vacancy on the world stage left by the U.S. under Trump. It has inserted nationals into key posts in many multinational institutions—from the U.N. and Interpol to the IMF—and its contributions to the World Health Organization, the U.N.'s health agency, have grown by 52% since 2014, up to $86 million in 2018 and 2019 (though still only about a 10th of the U.S. contributions in the same period). China has found a willing partner in the Kremlin to reorientate the world order away from the U.S. "Being among the main victor powers in World War II and permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, China and Russia shoulder the task of safeguarding global peace," Xi told Russian President Vladimir Putin in a call on May 8.

But while China has won representation in international institutions, its values often remain at odds with their goals. "As China tries to fill the void left by the U.S., we shouldn't forget that the [Communist Party] prioritizes its own interests over those enshrined in those institutions," says Lucrezia Poggetti, an analyst with the Mercator Institute for China Studies in Berlin. When those interests clash, China's tend to win out—as when Interpol's Chinese chief Meng Hongwei was arrested in 2018 and later jailed as part of an anticorruption drive by Xi.

Trump makes no pretense of leading the world. When a global virtual summit toward finding a COVID-19 vaccine was held May 4, Washington chose not to attend. "The two largest, most powerful countries in the world are not participating in efforts to stop this pandemic and contribute to the knowledge base," says Dr. Maureen Miller, an infectious-disease epidemiologist at Columbia University.

But China's lack of interest in shared global values is not lost on the general public. According to a Pew survey published in December, Xi inspires less confidence than any of the current leaders of the U.S., Germany, France and Russia, at just 28%. (Though Trump scores only a single percentage point better.) Roughly two-thirds of Americans have an unfavorable view of China. Even the usually myopic CCP is waking up to the fact. In a report presented to Xi in early April, China's Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, which is overseen by the Ministry of State Security, concluded that global anti-China sentiment is at its highest since the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

This is not likely to matter much to Xi while the world remains in the shadow of the coronavirus. Beijing is acutely paranoid and puts party legitimacy above all else, and so external ambitions will always be sacrificed to domestic stability—especially important as a slowing



Children eat at tables with plastic partitions at a reopened kindergarten in Yongzhou on May 11

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

economy gnaws away at jobs and livelihoods. Inside China, surveillance measures installed for public health will be ramped up with an eye to stemming future social strife. "This train is only moving in one direction, and that is toward increased ability to surveil and control," says Ker Gibbs, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai.

Control isn't fertile ground for creation, though. What Chinese leaders often miss is that American influence stems more from its dynamic colleges, Hollywood and the NBA than the Beltway. Yet a defining characteristic of Xi's "China Dream" is its inability to cultivate the kind of soft power that gives other countries a larger presence on the world stage. While South Korea has K-pop and the U.K. has Premier League soccer, China has stifling control. Last year, censors blurred the pierced earlobes of male pop stars lest their "feminism" corrupt the nation's boys. Chinese rock musician Li Zhi had a tour canceled, his social-media accounts deleted and music expunged from streaming sites after he obliquely referenced the Tiananmen Square massacre. Even record-breaking period drama *Story of Yanxi Palace*—China's equivalent of *Downton Abbey*—was taken off the air last year after state media decried the "negative influence on society" of its extravagant tales of imperial intrigue.

Instead, artists must be absurdly passive or patriotic. The latest hit from Chengdu-based rap collective CD Rev is titled "Mr. President," and includes chest-thumping lyrics like "We don't pick up a fight but we ain't intimidated by hawks/ 1.4 billion people we on a warship/ maybe you strike me first try to destroy Huawei/ that makes me sick you full of hate." Speaking with TIME, lead singer Wang Zixin denied all songs prop up the party: "We also do antidrugs songs and songs promoting feminism."

Not exactly "F-ck tha Police." Under Xi, there's simply not enough creative space to build cultural currency outside an ever narrowing Chinese society. China's political system boosted its internal COVID-19 response and shields its economy, but global leadership is hamstrung by a lack of shared culture or values. That is not going to change unless China opens up and reforms—a complete reversal from its current course. "China's influence stems almost entirely from its money," says Scott W. Harold, an East Asia expert at the U.S. policy think tank Rand Corporation. That in itself might give it a temporary boost coming out of the coronavirus, but not enough of one to transform the world.

As night set on Shanghai Disneyland, a kaleidoscope of light emblazons the Magic Castle with "thanks" in different languages to honor frontline medical workers, bringing tears to the eyes of the nurse Qi. "America is the home of Disney," Qi says. "It would be a dream to visit there one day." If American political leadership has receded, its deep cultural bonds are more difficult to replace. That is the kryptonite to Communist China's global ambitions—to lead, it has to be liked, too. —*With reporting by* KIMBERLY DOZIER, JOHN WALCOTT *and* JUSTIN WORLAND/WASHINGTON ☐

As COVID-19 spreads into smaller, less affluent counties, it threatens towns like Fairmont, W.Va., seen here on April 6

THE NEXT WAVE

Rural America may be letting down its guard just as the virus hits

BY VERA BERGENGRUEN

PHOTOGRAPH BY KRISTIAN THACKER

IT'S CATTLE-BRANDING SEASON IN THE panhandle of Nebraska, but this spring, things look different. Usually one of the biggest social events of the year in a state where livestock makes up two-thirds of farm revenue, brandings have been cut down to the essentials: no children; no older crew members; and bag lunches instead of community gatherings. "This is not the year to have your daughter's friend from the city out to experience a branding," a local news article warned. "Not taking precautions can mean the difference between life and death for some loved ones."

COVID-19 is not yet widely visible across the roughly 15,000-sq.-mile region, which has only 75 confirmed cases as of May 12, but the danger of the pandemic is very real, says Kim Engel, the director of the Panhandle Public Health District. There are only 31 ventilators for 87,000 people here, so even a small spike could quickly overwhelm the local health system. "We're still waiting for our peak," Engel says, emphasizing that it won't look like the urban outbreaks that have dominated national headlines. "We're afraid we are really just starting on that upward curve."

In mid-April, President Donald Trump declared that largely rural parts of the heartland were in the clear, holding up regions like Engel's as ones that might reopen "literally tomorrow" because they looked "a lot different than New York." Several governors who have resisted lengthy stay-at-home orders are wielding the lack of urban density as a reassurance. "It's so important not to turn on the news and look at New York City and think that that's what Lemmon, S.D., is going to face in a month," South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem said at an April 1 press conference.

But as the country's leaders talk of reopening the shuttered economy, it is precisely these regions of the U.S. that are among the most at risk. A TIME analysis of county-level COVID-19 cases shows that the virus is only just now arriving in much of rural America. That means some of these sparsely populated areas could be letting down their guard just as the disease is about to hit.

Just over one month ago, on April 1, every single county in America with more than 100,000 residents had documented

COVID-19 infections, while just 1 in 4 of those with 9,000 or fewer people had a confirmed case. Over the past month, as urban areas fought for their lives, the virus was spreading outward to the least populated counties: the average number of infections per capita in rural America has grown eightfold over that time, and as of May 13, more than two-thirds of the smallest counties had at least one case.

In the rural heartland, COVID-19 threatens a particularly vulnerable group of people: an older, poorer population with access to fewer hospital facilities and medical staff. Overall, 18 million people live in counties that have hospitals but no ICU, and about a quarter of those people are over the age of 60. In Nebraska, 81 counties don't have a single ICU bed, and quarantining even a few nurses or doctors could quickly leave hospitals and clinics with no medical professionals at all. A recent analysis mapping the nationwide burden of COVID-19 by scientists at Princeton University concluded that the danger of overwhelmed health systems now "may be highest away from major population centers."

So far, help from the federal government in both money and guidance has been spotty, and rural health officials like Engel are worried. More than a dozen local health officials in rural regions and smaller cities tell TIME they are struggling to convince their communities to keep businesses shuttered and avoid social contact where the threat doesn't yet feel real and some local politicians are arguing it is overblown. "Now the public is saying, 'Who do we trust?'" says Carol Moehrle, the director of the Idaho North Central District's public-health department. "Some of our politicians are saying this isn't even real, or that this is over. Do we trust them or public health?"

MANGUM, OKLA., has already learned the hard way how untouched areas of the country remain one traveler away from becoming a hot spot. After a Tulsa pastor visited to preach to a congregation on March 15, some of the people he interacted with contracted the virus, a state investigation found. Three days after his visit, the 55-year-old pastor became the first Oklahoman to die from COVID-19. By then, a growing number of infections was quickly spreading among Mangum's 2,700 residents. Five weeks later, 31 patients and 21 staff members in the town's only nursing home had contracted the virus, and five had died.

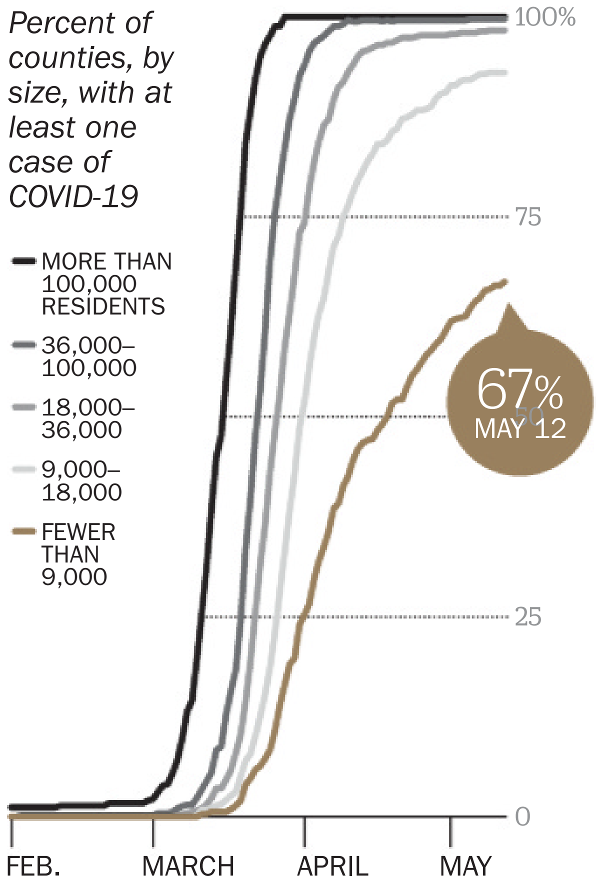
It could have been worse, if the town's leaders had not moved quickly. "Not in a million years did we think this was something we'd ever be dealing with," says the town's mayor, Mary Jane Scott. "We didn't think [COVID-19] was going to be that big in rural Oklahoma." The town quickly implemented a curfew and a face-mask policy for all public spaces and as of May 4 had no evidence of new community spread, she says.

But much like the rest of the country, rural areas are finding it hard to stay closed, especially as many feel the worst has passed. Crystal Miller was at her home in Lexington, Ky., making a pot of chili on the evening of March 6 when she got the call. As the director of the Wedco District Health Department in north-central Kentucky, she had been tracking the spread of the outbreak. But she had not expected the state's first case would appear in Harrison County, a rural region of 19,000 where cows outnumber people 2 to 1. "I'll never forget that day," she says.

The county's residents instinctively reacted by social distancing, weeks before it became part of the national vocabulary. Schools shut, and people avoided large gatherings and limited their shopping trips. The following day, "Nobody was in the parking lot of the Walmart," Miller said. But after more than seven weeks of closures and stay-at-home orders made the county a success story in containing the virus—16 cases and no deaths—caution has given way to economic pressure. "People want to do the right thing, but in this area of Kentucky people are frustrated and are starting to think, 'Haven't we flattened the curve enough?'" Miller says.

RURAL RISK

As the focus of the fight against COVID-19 has been on cities, the virus has steadily spread outward to the least populated areas



In some rural parts of the country, the push to reopen is snarled in politics. Idaho Republican Governor Brad Little issued a stay-at-home order on March 25. By then, Blaine County, home to the Sun Valley ski resort, had become a coronavirus hot spot, at one point exceeding the infection rates of New York City and shutting down the local hospital. But it didn't take long for some of the state's anti-government rural population to push back.

Starting in early April, Idaho Republican state representative Heather Scott, who represents Bonner County, urged her constituents to do just that. "The lying Trump-hating media, who continues to push global and socialist agendas, has told us there is an emergency," Scott says in an April 2 video update sent through her official legislative account. The governor had "bought into this frenzy" by issuing stay-at-home guidelines, she said, and they would not end without public pressure.

Such calls to action worry health officials like Moehrle, of the Idaho North Central District public-health department, in part because she knows they will fall on fertile ground in her five rural counties where the natural social distancing of life makes many feel immune. "Many are thinking this is not a big deal, being isolated is their lifestyle," she says.

The conundrum is that, while the danger for rural counties is real and growing, outbreaks are very hard to predict. The tools that would help—testing and contact tracing—remain sparse. Until they

PREVIOUS SPREAD: THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; THIS SPREAD: MIKE BELLEME—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

become available, the only certainty is the vulnerability of the residents. Moehrle's five counties have the largest elderly population in the state but just 15 ICU beds. As of May 4, her district had a total of 69 cases (16 of them just in the previous week) and 13 deaths. Her department has prepared for a late wave, she tells TIME, using the weeks of Governor Little's stay-at-home order to attempt to stock protective gear and prepare their health system as much as possible. For many of their residents, a surge in cases will mean death. "We just have nothing to offer them, no vaccines, no treatment," Moehrle says. "We're still waiting for our bomb to hit."

EVEN AS PRESIDENT TRUMP touted early opening in rural areas, federal health officials funded mitigation measures against the outbreaks expected there. On April 22, the Department of Health and Human Services announced it would award $165 million in extra funds to 1,779 small rural hospitals to combat the pandemic, as well as additional resources to 14 telehealth resource centers. Roughly $2.3 million of that will go to programs in Idaho, $3.9 million to Kentucky, $5.4 million to Nebraska and $5.1 million to Oklahoma.

Federal guidance has been a mixed bag. According to Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "reopening the U.S. will be a careful, data-driven, county-by-county approach" designed to balance public health and the need to restart the economy. In some regions, the need to balance risk is pretty clear: small towns like Mangum that have suffered outbreaks have found themselves shunned by their neighbors. "All the little towns around us started saying, 'Don't go to Mangum,' and I don't blame them," says Mayor Scott.

But the virus spreads quietly. For many smaller counties, even a staggered "reopening" means the resumption of travel and commerce, bringing goods, people and—quite possibly—coronavirus with them. "Those areas have neighbors," said Lori Tremmel Freeman, who heads the National Association of County and City Health Officials, "that may not be moving at the same pace."

Ultimately, the main infection route for rural America is coming from cities, even smaller ones with fewer cases, as happened with Mangum and Tulsa. To avoid a repeat of that, both urban and rural residents need to keep sacrificing, says Bruce Dart, executive director of the Tulsa Health Department. His own father, a 91-year-old Air Force veteran, is struggling with the financial and psychological toll of closing down the restaurant bar that he has spent decades building up. "It'd be breaking my heart to see my business, my livelihood, go down the tubes," Dart says, but "once we open up, there will be a surge in cases, and as bad as the economic effects are, we can recover from that. We can't recover from deaths."

How long does rural America need to keep enforcing these measures to stay safe? Government analysts, epidemiologists and local health officials give different answers, but all agree that the demographics and hollowed-out health systems of small counties mean there is a danger until there is a vaccine. Nebraska should wait until at least early July to begin relaxing social-distancing guidelines or risk a second wave of infections, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington. The estimate for Kentucky, Idaho and Oklahoma hovers around mid-to-late June. But even then, relaxation of social distancing would come with conditions that could be impossible to implement in these areas: "containment strategies that include testing, contact tracing, isolation and limiting gathering size," according to the researchers.

An examination room at the Perry County Health Department in Hazard, Ky., on March 13

Public-health officials in some rural counties are worried they'll be drowned out if emotions overwhelm science before a second wave hits. In Bonner County, Idaho, Sheriff Daryl Wheeler released a letter on April 2 pressing Governor Little to call an emergency session of the state legislature to assess whether public-health officials had deceived Americans about the severity of the pandemic. "I do not believe suspending the Constitution was wise because COVID-19 is nothing like the plague," he wrote.

In response, more than 320 county medical professionals published a letter in the local newspaper asking people to "stay the course" and trust their health officials despite the apparent low rate of cases. "Idaho has gone from less than 10 confirmed COVID-19 cases to over 1,000 cases in the last 20 days," they wrote. "Our regional ICU capacity is already stretched, and the pandemic has yet to fully penetrate our area. This is a health emergency!" *—With reporting by* CHRIS WILSON/WASHINGTON □

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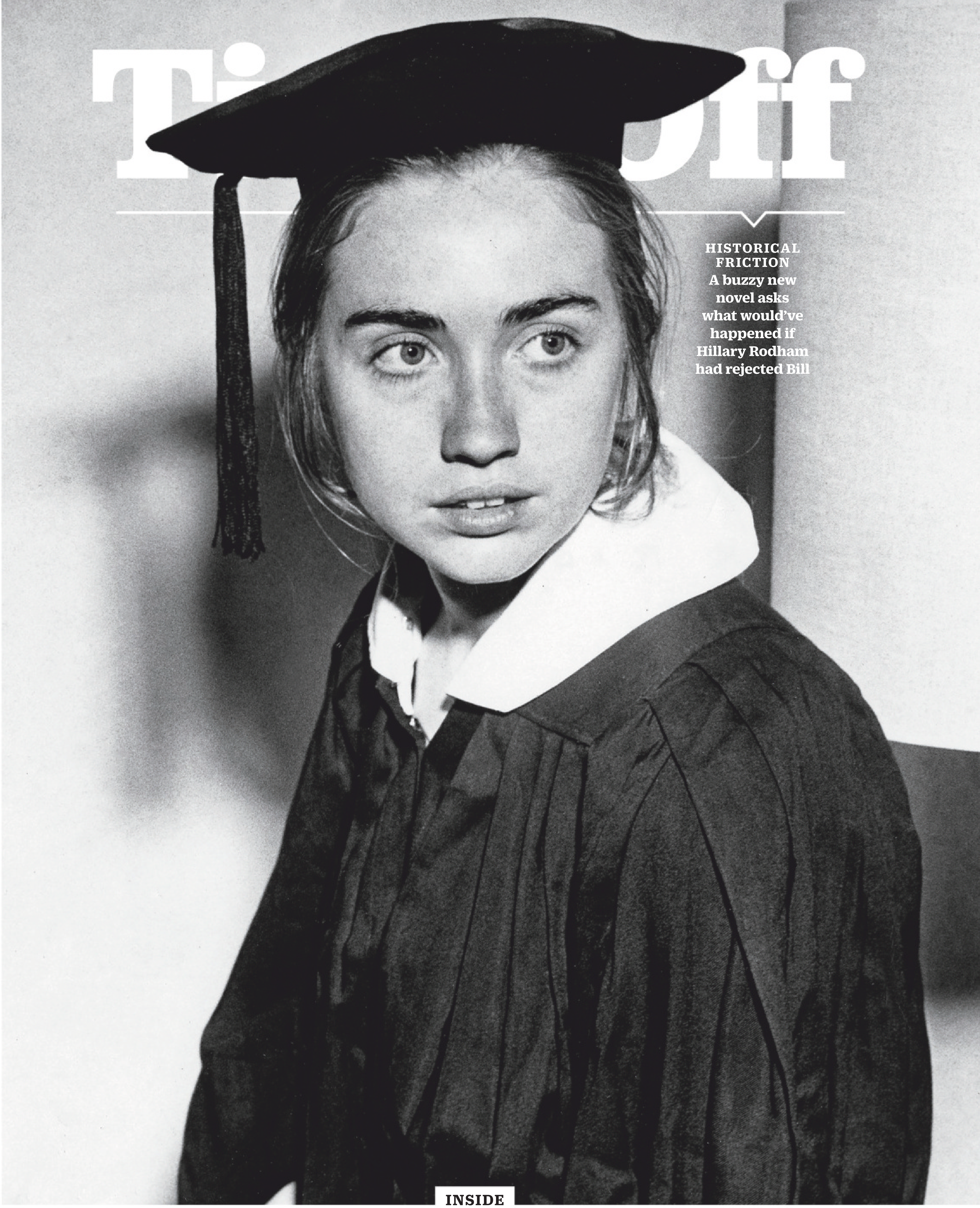


HISTORICAL FRICTION
A buzzy new novel asks what would've happened if Hillary Rodham had rejected Bill

INSIDE

TOM HARDY IS REBORN AS AL CAPONE IN A NEW BIOPIC

A ROYAL TREATMENT OF CATHERINE THE GREAT

WHAT WE CAN LEARN ABOUT ISOLATION FROM JANE AUSTEN

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN M. HURLEY

BOOKS

Hillary Rodham —on her own

By Eliana Dockterman

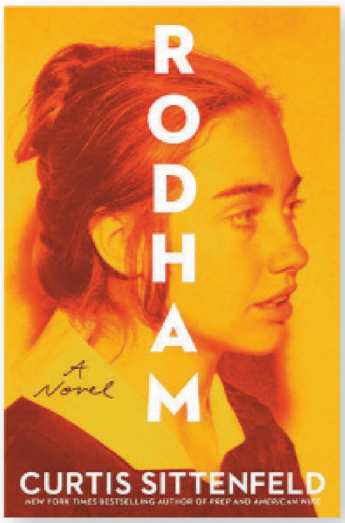
HILLARY RODHAM'S PRIVATE AND PUBLIC lives became entwined the day she met Bill Clinton. From then on, her political aspirations would forever be tied to her charismatic partner—when it came to both his triumphs and his missteps. But even before she met Bill, Hillary had already learned to be stoic. In the recent Hulu documentary *Hillary,* she reflected on her time in 1970s law-school classrooms dominated by men: "You got points for not being emotional. When you train yourself like that and then you fast-forward into an age where everybody wants to see what your emotions are … it's really a different environment." So when scandal broke during Bill's first presidential campaign, she compartmentalized her private life.

For years, pundits have called Hillary a cipher. At least some of this criticism is steeped in sexism—the dreaded "relatability" trap that women must be as warm and friendly as they are accomplished. Clinton has opened up professionally: she's a policy wonk, a pragmatist and—unlike some politicians who rely mostly on charm—she thinks before she speaks. Supporters have interpreted those moments when the wheels spin in her head as thoughtfulness. Critics have called it calculation.

For all the speculation, Hillary Clinton is still widely perceived to be unknowable. She's one of the most documented people on the planet, yet we're resorting to fiction to try to understand her. In the highly anticipated *Rodham,* arriving May 19, best-selling author Curtis Sittenfeld doesn't novelize Clinton's life as it is but instead fantasizes about what could have been: What if Hillary hadn't married Bill? No spoilers, but Sittenfeld's answer is likely to alternately elate and enrage readers of all political affiliations. She spins a wild political tale that involves a certain lascivious New York City billionaire, a bizarre leg-shaving scandal and Silicon Valley orgies.

The author, who broke out with her 2005 debut *Prep,* has tackled a similar project before: in 2008, she published *American Wife,* in which a First Lady named Alice Blackwell—reminiscent of Laura Bush—attempts to explain why she, a book-smart woman who was raised a Democrat, stands silently by her militant President husband as the Iraq War spins out of control. Then on the eve of the 2016 election, Sittenfeld released a short story, "The Nominee," told from the perspective of Hillary Clinton as she's interviewed by a combative journalist.

But *Rodham,* her seventh book, gleefully abandons biographical analysis for thought experimentation. Unlike *American Wife,* which delved into traumas the real Bush experienced early in her life to explain her psychology, *Rodham* introduces a Hillary almost fully formed, at law school. Sittenfeld does not detail the childhood moments that might have shaped her politics, her religiosity or her ego. The reader must divine the origins of her ambition from her pillow talk with Bill.



After a novel on Laura Bush, Sittenfeld turns to another First Lady

Certain early passages read like cringe-inducing fan fiction: it would be one thing to encounter veiled approximations of Bill and Hillary getting hot and heavy in law school. It is quite another to read sex scenes that invoke the real names of one of America's most prominent couples. Sittenfeld even goes so far as to imply that Bill is a sex addict, crumpled under the weight of an unstoppable affliction. (No doubt the publisher has a great legal team.)

While these carnal episodes will certainly serve to scandalize book clubs, they also are meant to solve this mystery: Why would a woman with such promise stay with a man torpedoing toward scandal?

SITTENFELD BLENDS reported facts with imagined details. Fictional Hillary, she asserts in *Rodham,* was often spurned by romantic interests for being too intellectual or too assertive, and she felt flattered by charismatic Bill's attentions. That's a theory likely born from comments real-life Hillary has made over the years about her husband being "more attractive" than she is. As journalist Amy Chozick observed in her book *Chasing Hillary,* Clinton's assessment of how her looks compare with those of her husband "isn't really true." But, Chozick added, it "always told me a lot about Hillary that she thought it was."

Yet flirtation and flattery do not a power couple make. In *Rodham,* as in real life, these two share an intense intellectual connection. But it's that very intellect that Sittenfeld argues would eventually drive Hillary away from Bill. In the book, the red flags Hillary identifies are far from subtle: early on, when the couple meets at a diner for a date, she marvels at Bill's ability to both seduce her and gobble down french fries at the same time. "Bill, apparently, could be hungry for multiple things at once," she notes. Her instinct that Bill's appetites will get them both into trouble quickly comes to fruition. Their breakup feels inevitable—although, of course, the real Hillary stayed.

In real life, Hillary twice turned down Bill Clinton's proposal before accepting

In a year when our attentions might more naturally be drawn to Joe Biden and Donald Trump, Sittenfeld isn't alone in her continuing fascination with the Clintons. The aforementioned four-episode documentary *Hillary,* which premiered to much fanfare at Sundance in January, hit Hulu in March. Then the April season premiere of the CBS All Access legal procedural *The Good Fight* imagined an alternate universe in which Hillary Clinton won the presidency in 2016. And the next installment of Ryan Murphy's popular miniseries *American Crime Story,* currently in preproduction, will focus on the Clinton impeachment.

Each of these projects, like Sittenfeld's novel, obsesses over the consequences of Bill and Hillary's relationship. In the Hulu doc, filmmaker Nanette Burstein asks both Clintons to recount Bill's confession to his wife during the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Bill tears up, but it's Hillary's clipped response that disarms the viewer: "*You* have to go tell your daughter." The line suggests a woman exhausted by her circumstances and unwilling, or unable, to express her outrage.

In *The Good Fight*'s alternate reality, the #MeToo movement never takes hold. Trump is never elected President, so there is no Women's March. But the show also suggests that President Hillary Clinton, who defended her husband against accusations of assault, would prove an imperfect beacon for survivors. (She awards major donor Harvey Weinstein the Presidential Medal of Freedom.) And the writers for *American Crime Story: Impeachment* have said that the show, which will be produced by Lewinsky and told from her perspective, will not feature Hillary Clinton as a significant character because the First Lady declined to participate in the feminist debate over the scandal at the time. Three very different television series, but in each Hillary finds herself hamstrung by her husband's misdeeds.

What if Hillary hadn't married Bill?

CONSIDERING HILLARY is Hillary and Bill is Bill, I don't think it's giving too much away to say that after breaking up early in *Rodham,* the characters do not retreat into quiet lives of academia. As they both run for office, Sittenfeld theorizes that when it came to their political ambitions, Bill always needed Hillary more than Hillary needed Bill.

Sittenfeld, an admitted Hillary Clinton fan, reflects on real-life Hillary's outsize role in Bill's capturing the presidency through compelling vignettes. In her reimagining of the infamous 1992 *60 Minutes* interview—the one in which a confident Hillary defended her husband amid allegations of infidelity, ultimately saving his candidacy—a different wife, meek and teary-eyed, sits beside Clinton and dooms his campaign. Meanwhile, in this fictional world, Hillary still faces sexism and defamatory rumors, including one about a murder for hire. But without Bill's baggage, she's able to handle controversy more deftly and answer questions more openly without worrying she may appear hypocritical.

And yet even as Sittenfeld grants Hillary the ability to finally do and say whatever she pleases, *Rodham* doesn't always satisfy. For one, Sittenfeld never pinpoints a clear motivation for her hero's desire to enter politics. Real-life Hillary notoriously switched her campaign slogans with abandon, which some took as proof that she could not articulate her reasons for running. Where supporters saw a woman responding to the call to service, critics accused her of being power-hungry. Sittenfeld, despite the freedom of her format, lands on neither theory—nor does she offer a convincing alternative.

If her aim was to offer new insight into Hillary's mind, she doesn't succeed. But who cares? Even if the character isn't compelling, her mission to break the glass ceiling is. For a certain reader, the chance to dwell in an alternate reality will be enough. For others, there's always the orgies. □

OPENING PAGE: THE BOSTON GLOBE/GETTY IMAGES; THIS PAGE: WELLESLEY COLLEGE/SYGMA/GETTY IMAGES

REVIEW

War in the South London streets

By Stephanie Zacharek

FEW THINGS ARE MORE TRAGIC THAN seeing young people go to war on the streets, over streets. In his debut film *Blue Story,* the U.K. musical artist Rapman—whose given name is Andrew Onwubolu—explores the gang-violence dynamic by zeroing in on two teenagers growing up in South London. Timmy (Stephen Odubola) lives in Lewisham but goes to school in Peckham, a decision his mother made for him years earlier, hoping to keep him away from the toughs in his own neighborhood. His best friend is Marco (Micheal Ward), a Peckham local whose older brother is involved in the "postcode" wars, but who hasn't yet acquired any veneer of toughness. Mostly, the two just hang out with their friends, going to parties in the hopes of meeting girls; Timmy has his eye on Leah (Karla-Simone Spence), and their courtship, when he finally makes it happen, involves inviting her over to his house to watch *Game of Thrones.*

But an accidental killing turns Marco and Timmy against each other, drawing them into a web of futile, and ultimately fatal, clashes. *Blue Story,* at its essence, is a narrative you've seen before. But Onwubolu vests it with firecracker energy—the pace never drags, even when you think you know what's going to happen next.

Plus, casting appealing actors can make all the difference: Odubola and Spence carry the movie ably as they spin their own innocent Romeo-and-Juliet subplot. Spence's Leah is a feisty charmer, and watching her lay the groundwork so Timmy can make the first move is a reminder of how male-female awkwardness has endured through the ages; their early, tentative courtship is soda-shop sweet. But Timmy's youthful openness is short-lived, and Odubola almost looks like a different actor in the movie's later scenes, his face as closed off as a mask of iron. When he and Marco come face-to-raging-face, the air around them stings like an acidic vapor. *Blue Story* ends on a note of hope, but not before stressing how useless it is for young men to fight over scraps of land they don't even own. Defending their turf, they succeed only in choking off the road to their own futures.

BLUE STORY *is available now, on platforms including Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV and Google Play*

Ward and Odubola: a blast of violence explodes a friendship

Feldstein: portrait of the rock critic as a young woman

REVIEW

She sold her soul for rock 'n' roll

In the relatively short history of its existence, rock criticism has mostly been the territory of guys: it's not so easy for women to break in, as young Johanna Morrigan (Beanie Feldstein) learns in *How to Build a Girl,* an adaptation of Caitlin Moran's 2014 semi-autobiographical novel.

Johanna is an awkward teenager stuck in a dead-end English town, yearning to become a famous writer. When a London music newspaper sends her to review a live show, she dives right in, reinventing herself as a flame-haired party girl with the nom de plume Dolly Wilde. Dolly starts out sweet, only to learn she can attract more readers by rendering poisonous judgments. The old Johanna—goofy, smart and charmingly enthusiastic—gets lost along the way.

How to Build a Girl, directed by Coky Giedroyc, isn't always believable; some of its key emotional moments feel unearned. But the movie gets by on its effervescent power-pop energy, thanks in large part to Feldstein. As Dolly, she's a spitfire, an identity Johanna tries on for kicks. But if Dolly's meanness is all surface, her vitality comes straight from Johanna's rock-'n'-roll heart. All she has to do is learn how to keep the beat. *—S.Z.*

HOW TO BUILD A GIRL *is available now, on platforms including Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV and Google Play*

BLUE STORY: NICK WALL; HOW TO BUILD A GIRL: IFC FILMS; CAPONE: VERTICAL ENTERTAINMENT; SCOOB!: WARNER BROS.

As Al Capone, Hardy never phones it in

REVIEW

A hallucinatory ending for Al Capone

IT'S ONE THING TO BE THE AL CAPONE of 1929, a glamorous gangster living the high life and ruling the streets of Chicago. But if that Capone could meet the 1940s version of himself—addled by neurosyphilis and required to wear a diaper under his silk pajamas—he might have segued into a more boring but safer line of work, like selling life insurance.

The older crime boss is the one we meet in *Capone,* written and directed by Josh Trank *(Fantastic Four)* and starring Tom Hardy. The movie opens in the early 1940s, shortly after Capone's 1939 release from prison, necessitated by his extremely poor health. He's now in exile at his Florida estate, tended to by his half-adoring, half-exasperated wife Mae (Linda Cardellini) and recoiling from the ever watchful eye of the FBI. Incontinence aside, it might not be a bad life. But the family is nearly broke, and there's a crucial detail that Fonz, as his family calls him, is struggling to call to mind in his foggy state: years earlier, he'd had the foresight to hide $10 million. Now he has no idea where he put it.

Fonz has other issues: he's tortured by vivid hallucinations of his grisly past and haunted by the spirits of the men he's killed. Perhaps worst of all, his doctor (Kyle MacLachlan) forces him to give up his beloved cigars, substituting … carrots.

Capone is an odd little film, at times weirdly engaging but often so bizarrely muddled that you might identify a little too closely with its perpetually unglued protagonist. But Hardy is always worth watching. Thanks to prosthetics, his face has the same doughy contours we see in pictures of the real Capone, but his eyes, at once dead and ruthless, do most of the work. This is the hollow gaze of a man who once had great, if ill-gotten, power and who is now just an old man before his time. (Capone died in 1947, at age 48.) In one scene, he and Mae watch *The Wizard of Oz,* projected in a home-theater setup, and Fonz stumbles toward the screen, singing along with Bert Lahr's Cowardly Lion in an almost incomprehensible mumble: if *he* were king of the forest, he sure wouldn't be stuck "smoking" carrots. The moral of *Capone,* left behind in its blurry wake, is that crime doesn't pay. Especially when you can't remember where you hid the money. —S.Z.

CAPONE *is available May 12, on platforms including Amazon Prime Video and iTunes*

REVIEW

Scooby-Doo, reanimated

For a dog, Scooby-Doo has lived an admirable number of lives: he first lolloped into the frame, on goofy-graceful Great Dane legs, in 1969, in Hanna-Barbera's animated series *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* Since then, he has ambled, sprawled and bounded through numerous TV series and movies, including two from the early 2000s starring Matthew Lillard. Now he and his Mystery Inc. pals return, in animated form, in *Scoob!* Do you need this movie in your life if you're older than 13? Probably not. But it's good-natured and jaunty, much like its gangly, quizzical canine star.

The plot is standard (not to be confused with Standard Poodle): Scooby (voiced by Frank Welker) and his four best friends, Shaggy, Velma, Fred and Daphne (Will Forte, Gina Rodriguez, Zac Efron and Amanda Seyfried), join forces with the generally inept superhero Blue Falcon (Mark Wahlberg) to foil a dognapping scheme hatched by Dick Dastardly (Jason Isaacs). As always, Scooby preens and prances, pulls off classic google-eyed double takes and eats lots of big sandwiches. Why teach an old dog new tricks when the basic ones have worked for so long? *—S.Z.*

SCOOB! *is available May 15, on platforms including Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV*

Rogers and Astaire in Top Hat: *they faced the music and danced*

FEATURE

Great films—for tough times

By Stephanie Zacharek

WE AREN'T THE FIRST HUMANS TO FACE HARDSHIP AND UNCERTAINTY, and those who came before us have left all sorts of survival manuals. Among these are the movies of Depression-era Hollywood—melodramas and gangster stories, comedies and musicals—that helped our forebears get through one of our most emotionally debilitating eras.

Depression-era movies are often characterized as merely escapist. But it might be more helpful to think of these pictures—made in a time of breadlines and shantytowns, when many people were out of work for years at a stretch—as symbols of resistance and resilience. In these films, we meet people more beautiful and charismatic and sometimes richer than we are. There are mothers who would make any sacrifice for their families, and men gone wrong who just cannot make themselves right. And then there are people whose wit and style serve as examples of all the things money can't buy—and who remind us that getting through life always boils down to some version of this mantra: Let's face the music and dance.

Movies aren't reality, but during rough times they often reflect the reality of our moods, our fears, our desires. These five pictures, all available to rent on Amazon, are just a small sampling of 1930s movies that might lift your spirits. If these movies worked for our parents and grandparents, they surely have something to tell us.

Five movies from the '30s to watch today

***TOP HAT* (1935)**
Set partly in a gorgeously phony, sparkling-white dream Venice, *Top Hat* features some of the most sublime dances Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers ever scaled, including the floaty dreamscape designed around Irving Berlin's "Cheek to Cheek." That's the one in which Rogers wears a dress quivering with ostrich feathers, a visual metaphor for the tremulousness of new romance. Astaire and Rogers were always great, but *Top Hat,* with its undertones of joy and wistfulness, is special.

***BOMBSHELL* (1933)**
We early 21st century beings may think we invented Kardashianmania, but the impulse to worship celebrities is in our DNA. It was certainly around when the magnificent comic actor Jean Harlow, of the lunar-halo hair, played the delightfully spoiled megastar Lola Burns in *Bombshell.* Harlow shows us that there's nothing new about the celebrity creation-and-maintenance apparatus—and that it's all too easy for celebrities to begin buying the hype themselves.

***STELLA DALLAS* (1937)**
The great Barbara Stanwyck gives a shattering performance as a woman from a working-class family who starts out as a conniving climber and ends up a reluctant mother—only to find herself becoming a fiercely devoted parent. *Stella Dallas* is so wrenching that it may reduce you to tears. But that's why *escapist entertainment* is such a loaded phrase: because melodramas are all about heightened emotions, they give us a place to put feelings we don't otherwise know how to deal with. Here, Stanwyck unlocks secrets we didn't know we were keeping.

***THE PUBLIC ENEMY* (1931)**
James Cagney's portrayal of Tom Powers, a street thug who rises to become a powerful player in Prohibition-era Chicago, is one lithe, leonine strut. This is a tough little picture, and Tom is unlikable as hell. But there are reasons fictional criminals like Tom—as well as real-life ones, like Bonnie and Clyde—resonated with a suffering populace in the 1930s: Tom lashes out at an unfair world in the most extreme, murderous way—but that doesn't mean we should underestimate the desires that drive him in the first place.

***GOLD DIGGERS OF 1933* (1933)**
Half musical, half naughty tale of showgirls plying their charms to get rich gents to buy them treats, *Gold Diggers of 1933* is one of the most jubilant films about being broke ever made. Ginger Rogers, Joan Blondell, Aline MacMahon and Ruby Keeler play the out-of-work lovelies, two of whom seek boyfriends with fat wallets. The plot is frothy, but the movie's finale—an elaborate number designed by Busby Berkeley—is a rather sober meditation on "the forgotten man." Nothing is simply one thing, as Virginia Woolf noted. And that goes for effervescent '30s musicals too.

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Catherine (Fanning) is quick to learn the dance of court politics

REVIEW

A *Favourite* writer makes Catherine *Great* again

By Judy Berman

IN 1744, SOPHIE VON ANHALT-ZERBST—THE DAUGHTER OF A broke Prussian prince—traveled to Russia, wed a man destined to become Emperor Peter III and was rechristened Catherine. Her husband was a boorish alcoholic, the relationship a gauntlet of humiliation. Both spouses took lovers. And mere months into a reign that began in 1762, his brilliant wife forced him to abdicate in a bloodless coup (though he was subsequently assassinated). One of Russia's most influential rulers, Catherine the Great reigned for more than 34 years.

It's kind of a funny story: a penniless young woman bides her time in a terrible arranged marriage until she's positioned to hijack an empire—and actually triumphs. Tony McNamara, who co-wrote Oscar darling *The Favourite,* certainly sees the humor in it. As creator of Hulu's *The Great,* he offers another droll, raunchy yet sneakily insightful account of 18th century court intrigue. It isn't quite the perfectly paced masterpiece that movie was; some episodes drag, including a smallpox romp that's more tiresome than timely. Still, its witty dialogue and lively performances yield a sharp, fun dramedy.

Billed as "an occasionally true story," *The Great* condenses history for maximum entertainment value. McNamara's Peter (Nicholas Hoult) is already Emperor by the time Catherine (executive producer Elle Fanning) comes into his life. Equal parts Eleanor Roosevelt, Tracy Flick and Sofia Coppola's Marie Antoinette, she arrives with visions of swooning romance, only to endure an abrupt, mechanical consummation as Peter chats with a pal. He already has his favorites, and she isn't one of them. The snarky, superficial women who make up the palace's catty clique don't like her either.

> ***'A great wind is blowing, and that gives you either imagination or a headache.'***
>
> Catherine the Great

Though Catherine dreams of creating a more educated, civilized Russia, her husband wants only to eat, drink and fornicate himself into a stupor. So she begins plotting a putsch with help from a timid policy wonk (Sacha Dhawan) and a disgraced aristocrat who is now her maid (Phoebe Fox). Hoult—who's played monsters since his chilling turn as a sadistic young man in British drama *Skins* and who was wonderfully vile in *The Favourite*—makes an exhilarating villain. Reimagined as the son of Peter the Great (he was really the Emperor's grandson), this Peter behaves brutishly because he knows, deep down, that he can never equal his father.

SOME VIEWERS WILL SURELY see the character as a riff on America's current leader, but don't let those parallels distract you from what's going on beyond Hoult's gleeful performance of narcissism. This is Catherine's story. And it's among the best of many recent pop-cultural reconsiderations of legendary women from centuries past; last year, HBO cast Helen Mirren as the Empress in the stiff period drama *Catherine the Great*. From *The Crown* to *Victoria,* we can't seem to get enough queen TV.

Yet my favorite portrayals of groundbreaking women are—like *The Favourite, Marie Antoinette* and now *The Great*—at least partially humorous (see also: Apple TV+'s messy, thrilling *Dickinson*). There's bleak comedy in the perennially relevant stories of women born into power or genius who nonetheless spend their lives battling—if not just enduring—mediocre men who believe them to be fundamentally inferior. At least Catherine's has a happy ending.

THE GREAT *comes to Hulu on May 15*

THE GREAT: OLLIE UPTON—HULU; SNOWPIERCER: JUSTINA MINTZ—TNT

REVIEW

Bong Joon Ho’s *Snowpiercer* rides again

IN THE HIERARCHY OF DISTURBING allegories for human society, the 1,001-car train Snowpiercer is up there with the Tower of Babel. Introduced in a 1980s French graphic novel, then revived in Bong Joon Ho’s 2013 film adaptation and a new TNT drama, both titled *Snowpiercer,* the train carries the only survivors of an ice age accidentally brought on by scientists in the near future attempting to counteract global warming. The vehicle can only function if it continues moving, and is segregated by class.

Up front, in the sprawling apartments and sumptuous salons of first, the superrich enjoy obscene luxury. Second class houses professionals, while third class is a slum for workers. Even worse off, in the filthy, lightless tail section, are those who stormed Snowpiercer rather than freeze to death in the initial cataclysm.

The train encapsulates the injustice of economic stratification, the existential threat of climate change and the plight of refugees: stateless people whose mere survival is criminalized. (These days, there’s extra resonance in its 1:1 correlation between size of living quarters and quality of life.) The combination of those powerful metaphors and a vivid physical world packs limitless storytelling potential. Much of the appeal of *Snowpiercer*—which carries over from the film to the TV show—is in its production design, which imagines spaces devoted to education, agriculture, nightlife, even swimming. Third class, for all its overcrowding, can be as striking as first; one of its cars resembles the neon-lit night markets of Hong Kong.

‘Science fiction should impose on our world.’

Graeme Manson, to *Backstage*

UNFORTUNATELY, THE SERIES doesn’t share the film’s thrilling pace. Bong’s propulsive, laser-focused *Snowpiercer* cast Chris Evans as a revolutionary fighting his way forward from the tail. But TNT’s version, helmed by *Orphan Black* co-creator Graeme Manson, is slower and more convoluted. Once a detective, Daveed Diggs’ hero Andre is preaching caution to fellow “tailies” thirsty for first-class blood when he’s summoned uptrain to investigate a murder. Though it separates him from his partner Josie (Katie McGuinness), the case provides an ideal cover for espionage. It also reunites him with his ex Zarah (a smartly cast Sheila Vand, star of cult vampire film *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*), now living a better life in third. The cross section of other characters he finds, from a prickly family in first to a train cop from third (Mickey Sumner) to Jennifer Connelly’s conflicted head of hospitality, takes several episodes to get straight.

It isn’t just the cast that overwhelms. On top of the investigation, the love triangle and the nascent uprising, this *Snowpiercer* (which counts Bong as an executive producer) crams in leadership crises, corruption and new environmental threats, plus ample interpersonal drama among supporting characters. The story lines start to come together midway through the 10-episode season, and Manson manages to raise some thought-provoking political questions. (In the event of a revolution, would second class ally itself with the rich or with the poor?) But with so much appealing TV out there, some are bound to disembark early. —J.B.

SNOWPIERCER *debuts May 17 on TNT*

Allies or enemies? Andre (Diggs) and Melanie (Connelly) face off

ESSAY

Home with Jane

By Raisa Bruner

ILLUSTRATION BY JENNY KROIK FOR TIME

LONG, SOLITARY WALKS. FAMILY DINNERS. DAYS spent wondering when life might change. Evenings spent in quiet entertainment: reading, scrolling, reminiscing. These are the routines of present-day isolation. But give or take a few centuries, a few social-media apps and more than a few civil rights, I might as well be describing the days of Jane Austen's heroines. There's a strangely comforting echo between the staid lives of her early 19th century women and current circumstances, for those of us fortunate enough to have our greatest challenge be coping with staying home.

In my first 50 days of isolation with family in our Idaho town, I read only Austen's novels—and I read them all. Something about the old-fashioned language, rules and predictably happy endings of her sharp romantic comedies offered stability. I was privileged to be safe and well. But like so many others coming to terms with a confined reality, I also felt somewhat adrift, cut off from the gratifying motion of life in the 21st century.

I benefit from many freedoms, including my choice of a profession, far more than Austen's characters could claim. But the more I immersed myself in the worlds of *Persuasion*'s sweet-tempered Anne Elliot, *Sense and Sensibility*'s thoughtful Elinor Dashwood and fellow protagonists, the more I found an unexpected kinship. To be a woman of a certain class in Regency England was to be socially distanced by default—isolated in the countryside, living at the pace of the seasons, beholden to restrictions set by others (namely, men). Set aside the reasons for being confined and we're left with a defining commonality: the need to fill our days at home.

TAKE FANNY PRICE of *Mansfield Park,* treated by family like a servant. With no opportunity for escape, Fanny relies dearly on her patience. While her cousins chase romance, she serves her aunts: as an exploited companion, sewing in demure silence, and as a constant target of snide comments. If Fanny can be kind and forgiving to less-than-deserving relatives—well, that's a humbling example for someone who recently snapped when asked to fix the TV.

At heart, Austen's heroines are homebodies, attached deeply (by default, perhaps) to their families and the locations they frequent on their moody walks. Emma Woodhouse is so committed to her father and their estate that she persuades her future husband to move in. The Dashwood sisters, though forced to move to a small cottage after their father's death, find joy there. "Is there a felicity in the world," Marianne asks while on a walk in nearby fields, "superior to this?"

To be a woman of a certain class in Regency England was to be socially distanced by default

Thanks to her family's precarious finances, Austen herself relied on the generosity of relatives, moving often. In the last year of her life, she was working on *Sanditon,* about a young woman visiting a family at their seaside home, when she became ill. "Sickness is a dangerous indulgence at my time of life," she wrote to her niece, forbearing even in bad health. She died a few months later, leaving the bulk of *Sanditon* unwritten. Even so, it is her most acute social critique, a spiky takedown of social climbers and travelers. It hints at her distaste for those who could not be satisfied with staying home, a luxury she could not always afford.

It can be strange to reorient to a single place, to recognize that our modern transience—moving homes, taking vacations, mingling with strangers in bars—is in some ways a recent privilege. Before this year, I had never noticed the snow's slow retreat from our porch or watched the buds on the cottonwood trees turn spring's iridescent green. I hadn't sat down to dinner with the same people every night in years; hadn't helped plan a week's worth of home-cooked meals, written a letter or sipped a drink with nowhere to go. Things are not as they should be, but I can admit that these are joys too—modest domestic pleasures that Austen's women know and cherish so well. ☐

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